THE Christian Belief:

Wherein is Asserted and Proved,

That as there is Nothing in the GOSPEL contrary to REASON, yet there are some DOCTRINES in it Above REASON; and these being necessarily enjoyn'd us to Believe, are properly call'd,

MYSTERIES;

IN

Answer to a BOOK,

INTITULED,

Christianity not Mysterious.

But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Mystery of God.

By Mr Bacon shall.

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THE CONTENTS, BEING ARTICLES,

Most of 'em advanced

In Opposition to the Positions of our Adversary.

THE Measures and Extent of Human Knowledge, in Objects of Sence. Page 2.
Transubstantiation, why to be rejected. p. 6.
The Knowledge of Spiritual Objects. ib.
Of Finite and Infinite Objects. p. 11.
Of Matters of Revelation. p. 14.
Three Inferences. p. 15.
A Vindication of the Maxim in Adoring, when we cannot Comprehend. p. 18.

The CONTENTS.

The Use of Reason in Religion. p. 22, 23. 41, 42.

Matters of Revelation not so easily nor clearly comprehended, as the Phanomena of Nature. p. 23, 25.

His Notion of Things contrary to Reason, rejected and disproved. p. 33.

Two Limitations to be observed, before we can pronounce any thing contrary to Reason. p. 33, 34.

Both confirmed and illustrated by the Article of our Saviour's Divinity. p. 40.

The Difference between a seeming Contradiction and real one, asserted. p. 46

Contradictions not to be pronounced in Matters of Revelation, because they do not comport with common Ideas in Objects of Sence. p. 47, 48.

Revelation, a Motive of Assent, as well as mean of Information. p. 49.

Matters of Revelation, how far intelligible and possible. p. 51.

The Difference between Divine and Human Revelation on that account. p. 52.

The true Notion of a Mystery, as applied to Things Incomprehensible, p. 56. 61.

His

The CONTENTS.

His Notion of Mystery exploded. p.58.
Mystery stated, with respect to Inadequate Ideas. p.59.60;62.
And proved against him on his own Principles. p.62.
The Notion of comprehending Things stated. p.67.
The true State of the Controversie, with respect to Scripture. p.73,74.
Authorities of Scripture, where Mystery is applyed to Incomprehensible Truths, 1 Cor.2.7.p.81. 1 Tim.3. 10. p.84.
Doctrines, or Divine Truths, contained in Scripture, that are represented as Mysterious, and proved from Scipture to be so. p.89.
The first Instance from 1 Cor. 1.23.24.
second Instance 1 Cor.13.v.9. p.94.
And 2 Cor. 12. 4. p.96.
And Col. 2. 23. p.97. *All which are expounded at large, and each Exposition ratified by the Judgment of the Fathers.*
The Opinions of the Fathers for the three first Ages produced against him, even of those he has cited. p.105,106.

How

How far the Knowledge of the Object is required in Faith. p.118,119.
That Faith is opposed to Knowledge, or Science, and sometimes in Scripture, implys an Assent to revealed Truths, as they exceed the Sphere of Human Perception. p.121,122.
This proved from Scripture, and the Authority of the Fathers. p.123,124.
The Belief of the Creation instanced. p. 120.
Mysteries proved from the Nature of Faith. p.134.
Miracles not to be admitted contrary to the Testimony of the Senses, and why. ib.
Miracles an Argument, à majore, *That there are Mysteries in the Christian Religion.* p.136,137.
His Historical Account of Mysteries exploded. p.138.
The Methods of Initiation in the Christian Faith, and the Discipline, Rites and Sanctions of the Primitive Church, cleared from the Imputation of Paganism, or Imposture. p.140.
These neither the Cause nor Product of Mystery. p.143.

The CONTENTS.

The Lawfulneſs of Ceremonies, eſpecially ſuch as the Eſtabliſh'd Church of England *enjoyns.* p.145.
The Authority of 'em aſſerted. p.146.
Not oppoſite to Chriſtianity. p.147.
The pernicious Deſign of his Treatiſe detected. p.149,150.
The Concluſion, in a Vindication of the preſent Methods of Anſwering by Inſtances. p.151.

Editions of the Fathers, Clemens, Alexandrinus, *Ed. Par.* 1629.
Juſtin Martyr, *Par.* 1615.
Irenæus Ed. Eraſmi, *Baſil.* 1560.
Tertullianus, *Ed. Par.* 1675.
Origen contra Celſ. *Edit. Cant.* 1677.
Dionyſ. vulgo Areopag. *Antw.* 1634.
Johan. Chryſoſt. *Par.* 1621.
Iſiodor. Pelyſiot. *Par.* 1638.
Theophilact, *Lond.* 1636.
Origen Comment. *Rothomag.* 1668.
Athanaſius ex Officina, *Commeliana,* 1601.

CER-

CERTAIN *Christian Doctrines,* Properly call'd **Mysteries;** And to be Esteem'd Above REASON, &c.

BEFORE I make any Formal Returns to the Positions advanc'd by this *Zealous Advocate for REASON*, I shall endeavour to fix or state the several Measures and Principles of *Human Knowledge*; I mean, with respect to the *Objects* of it, as it includes the Knowledge of Objects of Sence, of Corporeal

real and Spiritual Substances, of Finite and Infinite, and of Revealed Truths.

And, first, I can freely grant (what has cost our Adversary some Pages to prove,) *viz.* [" That no- " thing in Nature can come to our " Knowledge, but by some of these " four Means, *viz.* the Experience of " the *Senses*, the Experience of the " *Mind*, *Humane* and *Divine Revela-* " *tion*, *Sect.* 1. *Cap.* 3.]

But yet I think it very absurd, to advance one Rule or Standard for every Part or Branch of *Humane Knowledge*, and thereupon form Arguments, and charge *Contradictions* and *Absurdities*, without making the least allowance or distinction, *with respect to the nature of the Object, or the methods of knowing it.* Here is the Source of all our Adversary's Mistakes and Miscarriages, whereby (as will anon more fully appear) he has cast a Cloud upon *Reason*, rather than improv'd its Native Lustre and Glory.

And, *First*, as for the Knowledge of *Objects of Sense*; it's certain the Mind

Mind of Man, the proper Seat as well as Principle of *Humane Knowledge*, is here entertain'd by the Objects of the Material World; for, *Nothing but Matter in the ordinary course of Natural Knowledge make an Impression upon the outward Senses, so as to transmit, and fix an Idea in the Mind, suitable to the nature of the Object.* And certainly here is the great original Stock of *Humane Knowledge*; for the Senses are not only the standing Vehicles to all those Ideas, that are lodg'd in the Mind, (since even Faith and Revelation come by Hearing) but these very Ideas, if positive, and formed on Things and Substances, are little else but the Resemblances of material Sensations, or the Ideas of some *Object of Sense.* However, exalted and refined may be the Ideas of Angels and glorified Spirits, that have things presented to the view of the Mind by an immediate Intuition, it's manifest *we* that are cloath'd with Senses and Matter, and those of a very coarse allay, must have all our Ideas tinged with material Adumbrations: These are that

Glass upon the Mind through which we see darkly, and that wonderfully incrassates and disguises the Images of Things. It's true, in *Objects of Sense* our Ideas must be comparatively clear and exact, because we are seated in the very heart or center of the material World, where its Objects perpetually crowd in upon our Senses, and are continually presented to our view and observation: But yet, in *Objects of Sense*, which we daily see and converse with, we can by no means pretend an adequate Knowledge; for, we cannot comprehend or penetrate into their proper Essences, or radical Substances; no, we can go no further than Properties, Powers, or Faculties, that discover themselves in their Effects, strike the Senses, and leave an Impression, whence a distinct Idea is form'd. Again, We cannot pretend to discover the true Modes of these Properties, Powers, or Faculties, so as to discern wherein the precise Nature of 'em consists; for, at least, we can only resemble it by some Ideas that are form'd

form'd by the nobleſt of Senſes, that of *Seeing*; thus of *Smells*, and *Taſts*, and the like: So that we ſee the higheſt Philoſophical Exercitations, even in matters of Senſe, are at laſt wrap'd up in that we can juſtly call a MYSTERY. Its true, *Objects of Senſe*, tho' form'd from Effects and Properties, create a very certain and indiſputable Knowledge, becauſe confirm'd by daily and continued Obſervation, and becauſe the proper Objects of that part, which (as before concluded) is not only the Vehicle, but firſt *Elaboratory* of *all Ideas*; I mean the outward Senſes. *And therefore, in Objects of Senſe, we muſt receive and embrace a Thing as it preſents itſelf to the view of our Senſes, ſince we are aſſur'd, that GOD has appointed no other way of communicating matters of this nature to Mankind.* And to receive an *Object of Senſe* contrary to the Teſtimony of all our Senſes, (tho' upon the pretended Authority of *Revelation*) muſt overturn all the Meaſures and Principles of *Humane Knowledge*, obliterate the No-

tices and Distinctions of *Truth* and *Error*, raze the prime Faculties and Motrements of *Reason*, and reduce Man, the Glory of the Creation, and GOD's Image and Representative, infinitely below the level of *Brutes* that perish. *For this reason we may reject the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, notwithstanding the highest Pretences to Miracle or Mystery, since it implies a Contradiction of the Testimony of all our Senses in matters of Sense.*

But, *Secondly*, let us consider *Humane Knowledge* as engag'd about the Objects of the Spiritual World, or Spiritual or Immaterial Beings; for this must very much alter the Scene of *Knowledges*, and fix it upon new Measures and Principles.

And, 1*st*, It's indisputably evident, that our Knowledge of Spirits is of a mix'd nature, since it takes its rise partly from the Powers of *Natural Reason*, and partly from *Revelation*. The Knowledge of God and our own Souls, may in some measure be traced from the Powers of *Natural Reason*. The

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Frame of our own Beings, as well as that of the Univerſe, will inſtruct us, That there muſt be an Eternal, All-wiſe, and All-powerful Mover, agreeable to the Sacred Language: The inviſible things of Him from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead, *Rom.* i. 20. but as for the Exiſtence of other Beings, we call Spirits, or their Orders and Societies, we muſt wholly receive it from *Revelation*. Again; As for the Nature and Ideas of a Spirit, this muſt certainly reſt on the Inſtructions of *Reaſon* and *Revelation*; and after the beſt that can be given, God knows, our Attainments are very lame and imperfect; the excellency of our own Faculties and Operations tell us, That we are acted by a Principle within, that muſt be highly diſtinct from Matter, or leaſt, that we ſee and handle much more from that Great GOD, whoſe Workmanſhip is this very *Reaſon* that thus dictates. This very Argument ſuffi-

ciently instructs us, We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man's Device, *Acts* xvii. 29.

But now, tho' from good Arguments we may conclude, That a *Spirit* is a Being somewhat distinct from *Matter*, yet *our most exalted Idea will be but a meer Negative, or if Positive, a Resemblance of a refined Aerial kind of Matter*; so that our Ideas of a Spirit is much more abstruse, imperfect, and conjectural than that of a Body, notwithstanding the utmost assistances of *Revelation.*

And here I'm oblig'd to make some Returns to what this *Infallible Reasoner*, with the Authority of a Great Man on his side (as he calls him), has deliver'd on the Subject; it amounts to this: We have as clear an Idea of *Spirits* as *Bodies*, since both are only to be known by their Properties, and the Properties of a *Spirit* are as clear as those of a *Body*. See *Sect.* 3. *Cap.* 2. *N.* 16, 17, 19. But, with Submissi-

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on to the Infallible Chair, though ſome Properties which belong to thoſe Beings we call *Spirits*, are clearly known and agreed upon, yet they are not ſo many, nor yet ſo diſtinguiſhing as thoſe of *Bodies*; for, beſides the Properties of particular *Bodies*, that diſtinguiſh each other, there are Properties certainly known, that belong to a *Body* as a *Body*, and diſtinguiſh it from *Spirit*, and every Being that can be imagined; ſuch are extenſion of Parts, and a Faculty of poſſeſſing a Place in proportion to 'em. Theſe are for the moſt part Objects of Senſe, and Self-evident; *but we cannot decipher or determine any peculiar Properties that belong to a Spirit as a Spirit, and diſtinguiſh it from Body or Matter, and every thing elſe.* We may indeed conceive *Spirits* as Finite Beings, by the reſemblance of *Bodies*, and conſequently make 'em exiſt in a place, and poſſeſs ſometimes one place, and ſometimes another; but we can form no Idea how they exiſt in places, as we do of *Bodies*. As for *Thinking*, *Reaſoning*,

ing, and *Willing*, these seem to be too remote, to be the distinguishing Properties of a *Spiritual Substance* as such, being Faculties that seem to flow after its Radical or Original Properties are given. I am sure they cannot be so in the Opinion of my Author's Great Man, since in one place he tells us, [It's impossible without Revelation to discover (whether Omnipotency has not given to some Systems of matter fitly dispos'd) a Power to perceive or think. — And again, I see no Contradiction in it, That the first Eternal Thinking, Being, or Omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleas'd, give to certain Systems of created senseless Matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of Sense, Perception, and Thought.] Lock's *Human Understanding*, *Lib.* 4. *Cap.* 3. *N.* 6. And therefore I think it appears, there's a vast Difference between the Knowledge of *Spirits* and *Bodies*; insomuch that we may justly pronounce, *That no positive Ideas can be formed of Spirits, as Spiritual Substances, but what carry the*

Lock's *Human Underst.* lib. 4. cap. 3.

the reſemblances of Matter in 'em; other Ideas muſt be form'd by comparing 'em with Matter, and pronouncing what they *are not*, rather than what they are.

But, *Thirdly*, let us examin the Meaſures and Extent of *Humane Knowledge*, with reſpect to the *Object*, as it is Finite or Infinite. As for the Knowledge of Finite Objects, an Eſtimate may be taken from what has been deliver'd on the two preceeding Arguments, the Subject of which being chiefly Finite Objects: The preſent Enquiry then is, after the Knowledge of Infinite Objects; and here certainly the Nature of the Being that *thinks* and *knows*, will determine the Caſe, I mean, demonſtrate the *Imperfection of Humane Knowledge*; for *it's an Abſurdity in Terms, as well as in the Nature of the Thing, to imagine that a Finite Mind ſhould gain a perfect Comprehenſion of an Infinite Being*; inſomuch, that it ſeems no Preſumption to affirm, That GOD, by vertue of His Omnipotence, after He hath inſtated us in

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the Beatifick Vision, and discover'd things that *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor Heart conceiv'd*; or, in a word, after we have seen Him as He is, cannot possess us with an adequate Idea of His Immense and Infinite Being: So that with respect to the Godhead we must affirm, That our Ideas are made up of Negatives, and consequently with *Clemens Alex.* affirm, That we rather know God by concealing what He *is not*, than what He *is*: * Or, at least, if we attempt any positive Conceptions, we are forced to shadow 'em forth by some Finite Ideas which we have taken up, and are already implanted in us. Thus the Divine Attribute of Wisdom we are forc'd to resemble by a Faculty of *Discerning* and *Comprehending*, infinitely surpassing the Sphere of *Humane Knowledge*. Thus the Immensity of God, by a vast space, or an Idea that is without Bounds or Limits, or is not to be circumscrib'd. Thus

* οὐκ ὅ ἐστιν ὅ δὲ μὴ ἐστι γνωρίζοντες.
Strom. *lib.* 5.

Thus Eternity, by an endless Succession of Time. Thus we see, after our nicest Conceptions, and after the most accurate Characters and Descriptions from *Revelation* it self, we are forced to call in *Finite Objects*, and measure the Blessed Attributes of our Creator by *Finite Ideas*; an Undertaking so unworthy of him, that it seems to be a piece of petty *Larceny*, or rather a lesser sort of *Idolatry*, as 'tis a kind of Representation of the Invisible God, by things that are seen, by a kind of *Gold*, or *Wood*, or *Stone*, graved in the shallow Understandings of Impotent Men. Here our Weakness, our Blindness, plainly discovers it self; for tho' Knowledge in *Finite Objects* may appear bright and shining, here it must suffer an Eclipse, and lye confounded in depth of *Mystery*; and, in a word, humbly make St. *Paul*'s Recognition: *O the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom, and Power, and Immenseness of God! how unsearchable*, &c.

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But, *Fourthly*, let us descend to the last Stage of *Humane Knowledge*, I mean that about matters of *Revelation*. And, first, it's certain that pure Matters of *Revelation* are things of which the Mind, by its own intrinsick Light, can form no Ideas; and consequently we cannot pretend to know any thing more of them, than GOD in a reveal'd way is pleas'd to communicate. It's true, He seems to be obliged to communicate Himself in such a manner, that His Revelations, at least, may bear a resemblance to some of those Ideas we have already conceiv'd, or by the Power of Natural Reason can attain to. Thus does He reveal a Saviour that is GOD-Man, he's oblig'd to ascribe such Characters of Divinity to him, as are agreeable to the reveal'd Characters of the Godhead, and those Ideas we can form of it; and in like manner as to his Humanity; for otherwise I cannot conceive how any reveal'd Truth can be imprinted on the Mind, without Special Inspiration. But then, on the other hand, *when God*

God publisheth a reveal'd Truth in such Characters as suffice to inform us what he intends by it, viz. *a Saviour that is* GOD-*Man, or the like, he is not oblig'd (neither is it any way requisite to the reception of a reveal'd Truth) to demonstrate the* modus *of the Union of the two Natures:* First, Because the Subject of Revelation being Matters not attainable by Reason, and God the Author of them, as long as we have an Idea of the thing, or an Idea of what God proposes to be believ'd, the *modus* of it is to be placed on the Infinite Power and Veracity of God. Secondly, Because a leading Design of Revelation being to establish a Confidence in God's Power and Veracity, in order to an absolute Obedience and Worship, He did not intend to make us Philosophers, but reveal'd what was useful and necessary, and directs us to adore, when we cannot comprehend.

From what has been deliver'd we may form two or three Inferences; 1*st*, With respect to this last Argument, Whatever our Attainments

ments may be in Matters of Sense and Natural Reason, it appears, that pure Matters of Revelation lye at a great distance from us; and consequently Knowledge cannot penetrate much beyond the Surface, since they are not only things in their own nature profound and intricate, but all our Discoveries rest on the good Will and Pleasure of GOD, that communicates 'em. And therefore, if Revelation itself tells us, we know but in part, or imperfectly, we may safely affirm it, and place all Difficulties on the Imperfections of Humane Knowledge, or the Depths and Mysteriousness of Reveal'd Truths. *2dly*, It's a notorious Absurdity to argue from Ideas of Objects of Sense, or Material Objects against Immaterial ones; or Finite against Infinite, much more against Reveal'd ones. For it manifestly appears, that the Measures of Humane Knowledge are to be taken from each respective Object; for, as every Object hath a distinct Essence or Nature, so it hath distinct Properties and Modes

Modes peculiar to its Nature; and the Ideas we conceive of the one, may not reach or meaſure the other. This is even ſo clear, that even in Properties that are common to ſeveral Objects, ſuch as *Spirits* and *Bodies*, when apply'd to their reſpective Objects, carry no manner of Reſemblance to each other.

Thus it's an inſeparable Property of a *Spirit* and *Body* to occupy a Place, and yet the manner of exiſting in a Place is, no doubt, vaſtly different; inſomuch, that I cannot find how any Ideas of the *Ubi* of *Bodies* can conclude any thing againſt that of *Spirits*, much leſs meaſure or define it. And, by a Parity of Reaſon, we may ſay as much of the Unity of a Body, and the Unity of an Infinite Spirit; for the Unity of the Godhead or the Divine Eſſence may be preſerv'd, and yet communicate it ſelf to Three Perſonal Subſiſtences: and it muſt be abſurd to deny this, becauſe it will not comport with our common Ideas of the Unity of a Body. 3*dly*, *In Matters of* Revela-

tion, *it's as absurd to Argue against Reveal'd Truths, when the thing reveal'd is describ'd in such a manner, that we may know what is intended by it, because we cannot comprehend the* Modus *of it; since this would oblige us to reject several things, even in Objects of Sence, that are hitherto Unquestionable.* What I have hitherto deliver'd, is by way of Principle; and I shall stand by it as such, in defiance of the utmost Attempts of our *assuming Reasoner*; and having laid this Foundation, I promise my self Success, in unraveling his *Arguments* and *Positions.*

And first, to take him in the order we find him, before he gives you a State of the Question, he begins with the main *Burden of his Song*, and introduces you with some Sarcastical Reflections, upon the Managements, and Maxims of *Divines*, about Religion. As if the generality of Christians had no Notion of Religion, but Mystery; and Divines unanimously owned their Ignorance about it, [*Whilst they gravely tell us, we must adore what we cannot comprehend*;] and

yet

yet majeſteriouſly obtrude contradictory Comments, as infallible Demonſtrations of an unfathomable Myſtery.

It's viſible this whole Paragraph is ſpent upon the Clergy; for, who are to account for Mens Ignorance or abſurd Notions in Religion, but thoſe whoſe Buſineſs it is to inſtruct and remove 'em? Again; Who are to anſwer for Contradictions, but the Clergy, that reſolve all into unfathomable Myſtery, and yet by their peremptory Comments pretend to unravel all to a Demonſtration? This is a Strain of impregnated Malice, that runs thro' the whole Book; where the Clergy, by Inſinuation, Conſequence, or downright Aſſertions, are charg'd with Impoſture, as if they had induſtriouſly combin'd to reſolve all *Religion* into *Myſtery*, even to the carrying on of Contradictions: For in one place he makes it an *Aſylum* or Shelter to their Ignorance; in another, an Artifice of Uſurpation, to oblige the Laity to admit nothing as a *Branch of their Creed*,

till it hath been ratified from their *Confessor's Chair*. In a word, he represents 'em as Introducers of *Deism*; he might have added, *as Subverters of all Religion too*, since he makes 'em labour in nothing but Absurdities and Contradictions. And now you have the Character or Temper of the Man, and see where his poyson'd Arrows are directed. I shall with Patience, or rather Contempt, pass by all Strictures of this kind, and content my self with the Confidence of wiping off his Calumnies by confuting his Positions. To return then,

As for the Comments of some Divines, neither the Church, nor Body of the Clergy are to account for the Indiscretions which Heat or Passion has surpriz'd some of them into; but, I'm perswaded, the Comments of others will stand the Test of *Reason* and *Argument*, to establish those Truths we call MYSTERIES, better than those of *his* Faction or Perswasion, to shake or overturn 'em.

As for the Maxim that instructs

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us to *Adore what we cannot Comprehend*, I think it's extreamly proper where we can prove a *Myſtery*; for if God recommends an Article of Faith that exceeds the Comprehenſion of a Finite Mind, we may reſt ſatisfied with an imperfect Idea, (even tho' it be no more than what is needful to point out to us what God intends by it) and then ſurrender our Judgments to His Infinite Veracity for the reſt: A conſiderable Inſtance of Obedience (even the Obedience of *Faith*) as well as Adoration.

After this, he preſents us with the Opinions of ſome particular Perſons, or, at leaſt, the Fictions of his own Brain, concerning the Authority of *Fathers*, *Councels*, and *Scripture*, and the Rules of interpreting it: But I'm concern'd to aſſign what Deference is to be paid to *Fathers* or *Councels*, or what Rules to be obſerv'd in interpreting *Scripture*, till he thinks fit to charge our *Conſtitution with Error in theſe matters*. This is foreign to the Argument we are now engag'd in. The next

thing he presents us with, is, Two Opinions of nameless Parties concerning the Use of *Reason* in Religion, and the *Sence of Scripture*; and, at last, makes all sides (that differ from his Notions) joyn in this Position, (for I can put no other gloss on his words, when he affirms) That both from different Principles agree, [*That several Doctrines of the New Testament belong no further to the Enquiries of Reason, than to prove them Divinely reveal'd; and, that they are properly Mysteries still*, Ib. N. 6.] That there are Doctrines in the New Testament that may be properly call'd *Mysteries* still, I do not question; but I can evince in the Sequel of this Tract. But I cannot find where the Church of *England* has declar'd herself, That Reason hath nothing to do with some Reveal'd Doctrines, but only to prove them divinely reveal'd; for, certainly, *Faith it self is a rational Assent to a Divine Truth; and Reason will not only be concern'd to enquire and prove, whether God hath deliver'd it, but to form some Idea*

(tho'

(tho' an imperfect one) of the Nature of this Truth; at leaſt, ſuch an Idea as will convince us what it is God propoſes to our Belief.

Elſe we aſſent to we know not what. But after the utmoſt Reſearches of Reaſon, our very Reaſon may inform us, that there may be a great deal in this Truth or Doctrine, with reſpect to the Nature or Modes of the thing, which She can by no means comprehend, and conſequently may ſtill be juſtly accounted a *Myſtery*.

And now we come to his own Poſitions: [*On the contrary we hold, — That nothing reveal'd, whether as to its manner or exiſtence, is more exempted from its Diſquiſitions, than the ordinary Phænomena of Nature; and that there is nothing in the Goſpel contrary to Reaſon, nor above it, and that no Chriſtian Doctrine can be properly called a* MYSTERY. This he propoſes as the State of the Queſtion, agreeable to the Title of his Book, and conſequently all that follows is only a confirmation or making good *N.* 7.

of this Position. I must confess, I should be so fair to him, as to wait his Arguments; but because nothing shall stick upon the Reader, I shall make something of a return to such Decretory Assertions, in the order we find them:

And, *First,* this great Reasoner seems to play the Sophister, and express himself in a very ambiguous manner: He tells us, That no Reveal'd Truth is exempted from the Disquisitions of Reason. And truly, if he intends no more, than that the sublimest Reveal'd Truths may be examin'd by Reason, as far as she is able to comprehend them, we shall entirely joyn with him; for Revelation is thus far an Address to the Reason of Mankind, and she may lawfully endeavour to discover and conceive as much of their manner and existence as possible; *Provided she does not reject what she cannot comprehend, and that too upon this very Argument, Because she cannot comprehend the whole Manner and Existence of them.*

Thus far *Reason* may be concern'd, and

and yet Reveal'd Truths may be juſtly ſaid to be above Reaſon, and myſterious, and conſequently his Poſitions do by no means anſwer his Deſign, which is to prove, That Nothing is myſterious, or above Reaſon.

But if he intends, that Matters of Revelation, both with reſpect to their Manner and Exiſtence, may be ſcann'd and comprehended by Reaſon, as eaſily as the *Phænomena* of Nature; this we utterly deny, and with very good reaſon too: 1*ſt*, Becauſe there's no connexion in the Conſequence, the *Phænomena* of Nature are often Objects of Sence, and of a finite nature: But there are reveal'd matters that are in their very frame ſpiritual and infinite, and conſequently not to be comprehended by a finite Mind or Reaſon, *much leſs with that eaſe and clearneſs that Objects of Sence are convey'd to the Mind.* Again, Matters of Sence are knowable and comprehenſible by the Powers of Natural Reaſon; but there are Matters of *Revelation* that are not only incomprehenſible in their

their own nature, but knowable no further than God is pleas'd to communicate or impart to us. This is clear from what has been already laid down and concluded, and therefore this can be no Consequence; the *Phænomena* of Nature are easily comprehensible, therefore all matters of *Revelation* are so. This is so absurd, that I do not question but I shall make it appear in the Sequel of this Discourse, "That there are some "Matters of Revelation, which if "scann'd by Ideas of Objects of "Sence, carry the appearance of "Contradictions; and yet this can "be no Argument against the Truth "of 'em, or that we are mistaken in "the purport of the Holy Ghost, (as "the *Socinians* would have it) when "what we contend for is represent-"ed in the cleerest Characters and "Descriptions. And yet, this is the top of our Adversary's Reasonings. But, 2*dly*, as for Reveal'd Matters being *mysterious*, or *above Reason*, it's already concluded, That the radical Essence of Objects of Sence, and much more the Modes of their Properties,

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or their Existence, are above the Comprehension of Reason: If so, what hath been deliver'd upon Matters of *Revelation*, will oblige us to conclude, against our Adversary, "That they cannot be fully compre-"hended in their Nature or Exi-"stence, much less in the *Modus* of "it; and consequently, that they "are in the highest sence *mysterious*, "and *above Reason*.

But to proceed, in the next place he entertains you, pursuant to the Notions of his great Man, with a large account what Reason is, and what she is not; the Means of Information, and Ground-Perswasion: And I must freely own, that I can for the most part agree with him, and his great Man; at least it is not requisite to enter upon a nice Examination of every Paragraph, because I find he makes no particular Application of what he has so elaborately delivered in several Chapters, to prove his main Design. He tells us, Chap. 4. Sect. 1. [*That the Ground of Perswasion is Evidence, and Evidence he defines, an exact Conformity of our Ideas*

Ideas, or Thoughts, with their Objects, or Things we think upon.] The Description, I think, is well enough; but all this concludes nothing to prove what he contends for, *viz.* That nothing is above Reason; for the imperfect Ideas of Infinite and Incomprehensible Beings, must carry a Resemblance, or Conformity to the Object, or the Characters of an Incomprehensible Being; and yet it does not follow, but our Ideas are imperfect, and that there is a great deal in the Object, of which we cannot form any clear Idea. Indeed, if this were not so, he might justly infer, That there's nothing above Reason in Revelation. In a word, since he hath so industriously stated the Nature of Reason and Humane Knowledge, he should have proved, *That there are no degrees of Evidence, or Knowledge, with respect to the Nature of the Object, or Means of Information: That we have as clear and compleat an Idea of Infinite Beings as Finite, of an Infinite Spirit as an Object of Sence: That reveal'd Objects occurr by the same way as Objects of Sence*

Sence do; *or, That the Extent of reveal'd Knowledge, does not depend on the Good Will and Pleasure of God, in communicating what he pleaseth on every Object.* This would have clear'd off all Dispute, and proved what he thinks he's able to evince, *viz.* That the Evidence of all the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind, is as infallible as our own Being, *Cap.* 4. *N.* 14. That what is reveal'd in Religion, may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, Water, or the like, *Sect.* 3. *Cap.* 2. *N.* 12.] Or, in a word, that there's nothing in Religion, or Revelation mysterious, or above Reason. The two latter of these Parodoxes will receive such Replies as are proper in the Sequel of this Discourse; but I cannot pass the first without a few Remarks: And, to put the most favourable Construction on an Ambiguous Assertion, I presume, he affirms, That *the Evidence of our Ideas which we form of the several Acts or Operations of the Mind,* (viz. *Thinking, Contemplating, Knowing*

ing or Comprehending) are as infallible as that of our Beings. This is a Maxim advanc'd to prove, That we are to have the same Evidence in all speculative Ideas, and consequently in all Ideas of pure Matters of Revelation; for this is his Application of it: [*Let us now but strictly require this Evidence in all the Agreements and Disagreements of our Ideas in Things meerly speculative*, &c. Ib.] To shew the Weakness or Inconclusiveness of his Arguments, and the Falseness of his Positions, I shall instance in the general Act or Operation of the Mind, that of *Thinking*. And,

First, If he intends no more than that we have an Evidence (that we *think*, when we actually *think*, or that we have a Faculty to *think*) as infallible as that of our *Being*, I will easily joyn with him: But, can this be an Argument, that all our Ideas of Speculative Objects, particularly of all Matters of Revelation, (that are form'd by *Thinking*) rest upon an Evidence as clear as that of our *Being*? Again, If he contends for an Idea of the *Nature of Thinking*, that car-

carries an Evidence in it, as clear and infallible as that of our *Being*; I say, we cannot form an Idea of the *Nature of Thought*, but by retreating to some particular Instance or Object of *Thought*, and reflecting how the *Mind* exercises itself upon it; and before we can form a perfect Idea of the *Nature of Thought*, we must comprehend or discern the *manner* of the performance, and this will carry us into a great many Difficulties and Conjectures. We may indeed conclude, that *Thought* requires the application of the Object to the Mind, or rather the application of the Mind to the Object, which may justly be called *Attention*. Thus far the Idea of *Thinking* is clear and evident: But then, if we enquire into the *manner* how this or that Object is communicated or apply'd to the Mind, this seems to be inconceivable, even in Objects of Sence; for, who can pretend to describe how Material Objects are imprinted on an Immaterial Soul? Therefore we may conclude, that the Ideas we can form of the *Nature of Thinking*, and consequently

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of the Operations of the Mind, do not carry an Evidence in 'em as infallible as that of our Being.

But further; Admit we, that we could describe the precise *Modus* of the *Nature of Thinking*, and consequently had an Idea that carries as much Evidence in it as that of our Existence, it's absurd to conclude, that the Mind can form Ideas of the highest Speculations equally evident and infallible. The Consequence, in plain terms, is no other than this, Because the Evidence of the Ideas of one particular Object is infallible, therefore the Evidence of the Ideas of every Object is so. And certainly this is a Position that must pronounce all our Ideas equally clear and perfect, and the Means of Information infallible, and consequently there can be no Objects falsly represented to the Mind, nor no Ideas false or imperfect. This is *Mystery* with a witness, or rather Positions that in his own Language are, [*The Primary and Uniterical Origin of all his Errors*, Ib.] But, I think, he sufficiently confutes himself in the following

lowing Paragraphs, when he pronounces some things dubious and obscure, and allows false Ideas may be contracted by Precipitancy or Inattention, by Affection and Prepossession, *N.* 18.

And now for the Second, where he introduces us with a Description of what is contrary to Reason, [viz. *What is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct Ideas, or to our common Notions, is contrary to Reason.*] Now truly this I think is a very lame, imperfect, or at least fallacious Description, unless it be ballanced with some Limitations and Restrictions. *Sect.* II.

As first, It can only hold in Objects of the same Species, or Nature; *Thus we can only argue from Objects of Sence, against Objects of Sence, from Finite against finite, and from Matters of Revelation against pretended Matters of Revelation: For its the greatest Absurdity in Nature, to conclude any thing against any revealed Truth, or Doctrine, whose Object is purely Spiritual, and absolutely Infinite; because it doth not accord with*

our Ideas in Objects of Sence; I'm sure the Holy Ghost instructs us better, in obliging us to compare Spiritual Things with Spiritual. A sufficient Inhibition truly against discarding reveal'd Truths by any other Ideas, then what are formed from antecedent Notices of Revelation.

Thus for our Saviour's Divinity, before we yield an Assent to it, it's requisite the Characters and Properties of the Godhead, which are in the Books of Revelation ascrib'd to the Father, with respect to the Godhead, shou'd be ascrib'd to the Son. But then when this is done, it's absurd to reject this great Truth, as contrary to Reason, upon the force of an unreasonable Consequence, formed by comparing the incomprehensible Godhead with Objects of Sence.

Thus the Son cannot be God, because it must destroy the Unity of the Godhead; for the Unity of the Godhead must be destroy'd: Why? Because such Unity and Plurality can never be admitted in Objects of Sence, and consequently not in the sub-

ſublimeſt Matters of Revelation. But what is this but to proſtitute the Glory and Majeſty of the Inviſible and Incomprehenſible Godhead, by the vileſt Repreſentations? What is it but a making him like Gold, Wood or Stone, or Things graven by Man's Art. Certain I am, ſuch Maxims as theſe are the higheſt Contradictions to Reaſon; for if they might take place, it muſt ſhake the Foundation of all Revelation, even thoſe lively Characters which the Word of God hath given of the Godhead: *If they muſt be ſcann'd, or meaſured by common Notions, or Ideas that reſult from Objects of Sence.*

Secondly, *Before we pronounce any thing contrary to Reaſon, we muſt be ſure that we have a clear and perfect Comprehenſion of the Thing*; for tho' our Ideas that are ſeemingly repugnant to it, be never ſo clear, how ſhall we judge of the Repugnancy, as long as we cannot pretend to a perfect Idea on both ſides? This I'm ſure is a very reaſonable Injunction, between Objects of Sence, and Matters of Revelation; ſo that if God

hath delivered any revealed Truth, and by comparing it with the Ideas and Characters of other reveal'd Truths, we must conclude, he intended such a particular thing, and at the same time discern the Incomprehensibleness of it; insomuch that we cannot form an adequate Idea; it's absurd to reject it, because this imperfect Idea will not comport with certain clear Ideas in Objects of Sence. '*Here if any Difficulties, Absurdities, or Contradictions arise, Reason will direct us to place 'em upon the Weakness of our Understandings, or our imperfect way of comprehending such unfathomable Objects; and with St.* Paul, *engage us to cry out, Who is sufficient for these things?* And now if my Adversary will add these Limitations to his Definition (as I'm perswaded he'll be forced to do) I do not question, but I can wipe off all the Absurdities produced in the following Chapter, at least by shewing their Impertinence to the Case before us. And on this account, I pass by 'em, as well as because there's nothing in 'em, that affects any thing al-

already delivered, but either confirms, or may be fairly solved by it, I therefore proceed to his Argument, *Sect.* 2. *Cap.* 1. *N.* 4.

The first thing I shall insist upon is, [*That if any Doctrine of the New Testament be contrary to Reason, we have no manner of Idea of it: To say for instance, that a Ball is White and Black at once.*] Here he sufficiently discovers himself; he tells us before, That whatever is repugnant to common Notions, is contrary to Reason; and what his common Notions are, the Instance before us, sufficiently informs; that is, in plain *English*, whatever does not comport with the most trite Ideas of Objects of Sence is contrary to Reason; and therefore the most sublime revealed Truths (whose Objects are Spirits, and Infinite Spirits, and consequently the Ideas we can pretend to, must be highly imperfect) because we cannot adjust them with the most common Ideas of Sence, are contrary to Reason. But the Absurdity of this Assertion, I hope, I have sufficiently exploded.

But, to deliver my own Sentiments of matters of this nature once for all, I do believe there's an eternal and universal Harmony in Reason, as well as things both created and uncreated. The Reason of Mankind is certainly an immediate Transcript of Infinite Reason, and all the Councels, Decrees, and Declarations of Heaven are the Dictates of Infinite Reason, and the Reason of Mankind must be establish'd upon the unalterable Rules or Measures of Infinite Reason; and therefore there can be no Ideas of Infinite Truths or Objects (provided they are compleat and perfect, such as GOD can conceive of Himself) which really contradict the Rules and Measures of *Humane Reason*, if she were enabl'd to comprehend 'em as clearly as her Maker.

But yet, I think, I have made it appear, that after all the Researches of Reason, there are reveal'd Objects of which we can form but very imperfect Ideas, both with respect to their *Nature*, *Existence*, and *Modus*, and yet we may form such an Idea as

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inſtructs us what God intends we ſhould believe.

From hence we may conclude, "That as their nature is peculiarly di-"ſtinguiſht from all other Beings, ſo is "the *Modus* of their Exiſtence: So that it's highly abſurd to deny our Aſſent to the Truth of it, becauſe we can form no Idea that will comport with thoſe we have form'd on *Objects of Sence*, and conſequently adjudge it to be contrary to *Reaſon*. "This is a Contradiction to the "Eternal Laws of right *Reaſon*, "which, in Caſes of this nature, di-"rect us to fix the Abſurdity or Con-"trariety on the Imperfections of "our Underſtanding, or the Falſe-"neſs of the Rule, in judging *Mat-"ters of Revelation* by *Objects of "Sence*.

In a word, from what hath been ſaid, we may, in expreſs terms, affirm, That we can form imperfect Ideas of *Matters of Revelation*, ſo far as to know what God propoſes to our Belief: And yet, when we proceed to examine the *Modus* of their Exiſtence, we cannot reconcile

it with the Ideas of *Objects of Sence*; and, for all this, we must not pronounce any thing of this nature contrary to *Reason*; or esteem those imperfect Ideas, no Ideas at all.

Give me leave to illustrate this matter in an Instance which the *Socinian* chuses to advance his own Hypothesis, by exploding it; I mean, the *Divinity* of *our Saviour*: We affirm him to be possess'd with the *Fulness of the Godhead*, because his *Divinity* is describ'd in Characters that are peculiar to the Godhead, and such as correspond with those Ideas of the Godhead as are form'd by the Assistance of *Revelation*. He rejects his *Divinity*, because he proceeds further, and examins the *Modus* of its Existence, with respect to the Unity of the Godhead, and its Union with Humane Nature; and thereupon forms a *Modus* by some common Ideas or Notions, and then compares it with other Ideas of the same rank and quality, and rejects those Ideas which Scripture has given us of his Divinity, by pronouncing such a *Revelation* absurd and con-

contrary to Reaſon, becauſe the *Modus* of its Exiſtence with the Unity of the Godhead and Humanity, (a thing form'd and hammer'd out of his own ſhallow Underſtanding,) does not comport with common Ideas of *Objects of Sence*. Here, I think, is a Complication of Abſurdities, or things that run counter to the eternal Meaſures of right Reaſon; the Godhead of our Bleſſed Saviour is rejected and deny'd, as contrary to Reaſon, not becauſe we want Revelation for it, ſince we may read it in the cleareſt Characters; but we muſt expound theſe away, 1*ſt*, Becauſe we cannot comprehend the *Modus* of its Exiſtence (a thing that often exceeds our Comprehenſion) even in Philoſophical Diſquiſitions. 2*dly*, Becauſe we cannot form a *Modus* that comports with common *Ideas* or *Notions* in *Objects of Sence*. "But, if Conſequences of this "nature are ſuffer'd to take place, "againſt ſuch legible Characters of "Divinity, it muſt overturn thoſe "Ideas of a GOD, which Revelation "and Natural Reaſon hath furniſh'd

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"us with, since the Characters of "both are equally clear and un-"deniable.

I have dwelt too long on this Argument, but not without Design, because I would not be oblig'd to make a formal Return to every little Passage that runs against us, or dispels every Speck of a Cloud that's rais'd upon Sophistry or False Arguing: I am sure I have offer'd enough to take off the Force of what he hath suggested in the following Paragraph, *N.* 5. for, he's a compleat Conjurer, raises his own Devil, and then lays it, frames an Objection, and gives his own Answer to it; it's this: [*If any will think to evade the Difficulty, by saying, That the Ideas of certain Doctrines may be contrary indeed to common Notions, yet consistent with 'emselves, —— he's but just where he was.*] Now, I have already deliver'd the Measures of forming *reveal'd Ideas*, not by comparing 'em with *Objects of Sence*, but *Spiritual Things* with *Spiritual*: I will admit, indeed, it may be done by common Notions; if he'll restrain his common Notions,

ons, as he does in the cloſe of his Paragraph, or, at leaſt, with ſome Improvement added to 'em; for I can freely ſubſcribe: [*That we cannot otherwiſe diſcern His Revelations, but by their conformity with our Natural Notices of Him,*] GOD he means; or, at leaſt, thoſe Improvements we receive of Him from Revelation. And in this ſence our Saviour's Divinity is not contrary to common Notions; for we can form an Idea of it agreeable to thoſe Characters which Revelation and Natural Reaſon gives us of the Godhead; but, then the Difficulty lies in comprehending the Union and Exiſtence of the two Natures together, which we call the *Modus* of the thing; and this, we ſay, is not to be meaſur'd by common Notices, for, to a Finite Mind, it's Incomprehenſible: "But then it "is not a Doctrine of Chriſtianity, "that we ſhould comprehend it; "much leſs is it a Doctrine of Reaſon "or Chriſtianity that we ſhould ex- "clude or caſhier the cleareſt Cha- "racters of our Saviour's Divinity or "Incarnation from being a Doctrine

"of

"of Christianity, because we cannot "comprehend the manner of the U-"nion of the two Natures, nor form "any clear Idea of it, at least, such "as will comport with common No-"tions. It's true, we may resemble it, as it is done in one of our Creeds. As the reasonable Soul and Flesh is *One Man*, so GOD and Man is *One* CHRIST; but we do not advance a Similitude into a compleat Idea, or an Article of Faith.

But, to offer a word or two more, if this method of Arguing may be admitted, I cannot conceive but it must explode the Belief of the Soul, or any Principle distinct from Matter, because we cannot fix the *Modus* of its Union, or conceive an Idea of the manner of its incessant Intercourses with the Body.

To conclude this Argument, from what is said, I think here's enough to defeat our Adversary's Triumphs, even over his own Objection; for, we may safely affirm, That as the Nature of the Godhead is distinguish'd by Properties peculiar to it self, so we may justly conclude, that

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it has a manner of Exiſtence with Humanity ſo peculiar to itſelf, that we muſt not pretend to comprehend it, by comparing it with Objects of Sence; and yet we can freely own, that there's neither Neceſſity nor Poſſibility of its being comprehended by us, or of determining what is the preciſe *Modus* of it.

And thus much of his Notion of *Self-conſiſtence*. And as for his Sarcaſtical prophane way of Arguing, when he tells us, That *Four may be called Five in Heaven*; he might know, 'That *Numbers* are only *empty Denominations*, and *no Arguments* to be 'form'd from 'em, but as apply'd to '*Things*; and then, if we conſider 'Heavenly Objects with reſpect to 'the manner of their Exiſtence, a '*Unity* and a *Trinity* may be con-'ſiſtent, for any thing he knows to 'the contrary. And this is ſufficient to prevent any modeſt Man from pronouncing Contradictions upon ſuch unfathomable Truths, by meaſuring their *Modus* by Common Notions, things that exceed our Comprehenſion as much as they are beſides

sides the Business of our Curiosity or Faith. Here we may discern the Origin of his ill Reasonings *to be want of distinguishing Things*, I mean the *Being* of a *Thing*, and the *Manner* of its *Existence*, with respect to itself, or as 'tis united to something else.

From hence I pass to *N.* 9. for nothing intervenes that directly concerns the present Controversie, or, at least, has not had a Reply to it. And here I cannot joyn with him, when he affirms, That *a seeming Contradiction, (even in Matters of Revelation) is to us as much as a real one*; for, I think, the Difference is palpable in all cases, but especially in Contradictions upon the *Nature of Things*; for 'We call that a *seeming Contradicti-* '*on*, when there's a Repugnancy dis- 'covers itself, but we have not a clear 'and perfect Conviction of it: And, I suppose, this must arise for want of a clear and perfect Idea of each Term, or rather Object, of the Contradiction; and, till this is gain'd, Reason must suspend, and neither determine that she is in the right or wrong, till fresh Evidence offers to

turn

turn the Scale. But now, a *real Contradiction*, or rather a *clear Contradiction*, (for it ſhould paſs under this Name with reſpect to our knowledg of it) is, "When we have a clear "and unqueſtionable Idea of both "parts of it, or both Objects, and "thence conceive an irreconcilable "Repugnancy. But now, in matters of pure Revelation, whoſe Nature is ſpiritual and infinite, I cannot ſee how Reaſon can direct us to pronounce or determine *real* or *clear Contradictions* between them and Common Notions, becauſe we cannot pretend to an *adequate* or *clear Idea*; I mean, that which is comparatively ſo, with reſpect to thoſe of *Objects of Sence*, and conſequently cannot decree what *real Repugnancy* lies between them: And therefore, if ſeeming Contradictions or Difficulties ariſe, by comparing *reveal'd Truths* with common *Ideas* or *Notions*, Reaſon cannot (as this Author would have it) pronounce a *real Contradiction*, and ſuſpect there can be no *reveal'd Truth*, eſpecially when there are the cleareſt Characters of the thing

thing corresponding with *Ideas* of the same nature. "Here Reason must "oblige us to place the Contradictions "ons on our Inabilities in comprehending Matters of this nature, and "yield an Assent upon the Authority "of Infinite Power and Veracity." For when Revelation has set forth the thing in the cleareſt Characters, and the very same in which the fundamental Article of all Revelation is represented to us, I mean that of the Godhead, if seeming Contradictions must be suffer'd to discard it, it's impossible we can yield any Assent to the Being of a GOD; for, where the Characters are as clear for one as the other, and both rest on the same Authority, that of *Revelation* to *dispute* the one, must *call in question* the other.

Proceed we, in the next place, to consider what is deliver'd on the Authority of *Revelation*, he means that which is Divine, *Cap.* 2. *N.* 11. And here I cannot be reconcil'd to the Distinction he gives us: [*Revelation is not a necessitating Motive of Assent;*

but

but a Mean of Information.] Now, truly I can ſee no Abſurdity in ſaying, That the ſame thing may be a Mean of Information, and a Motive of an Aſſent too, for an Information carries an Aſſent along with it proportionable to the Credit or Authority of the Informer. Now *Revelation* is certainly a Mean of *Information*, ſince it preſents us with new Objects, which *Natural Reaſon* could never diſcover; But, beſides this, it is an *Information* that proceeds from *Infinite Veracity*, attended with *Infinite Power*, *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*: Herein it's diſtinguiſh'd from Human Revelation; *And therefore, when once we are aſſur'd (ſo as to yield a firm Aſſent) that ſuch a particular Article is reveal'd, it becomes the moſt neceſſitating Motive of Aſſent; I mean, to the Truth of it*; becauſe, this being granted, here's *Infinite Veracity*, *Wiſdom*, *Power* and *Goodneſs* againſt our *Imperfect Conceptions*, and the ſeeming Difficulties founded in 'em. When once we aſſent or yield it to be Divine Revelation, I think, we may ſafely affirm, againſt this *Reaſoner*,

[*We may believe purely upon his Word, without Evidence, (at least such as he requires) in the things 'emselves*]. *Here the Authority of him that speaks, not my Conception of the thing, or what he says, is the Ground of my Perswasion*].

But, to proceed, as for what this Reasoner says of God's Omnipotence and Contradictions, *N.* 13. no one is so silly to imagine, that real Contradictions are an Object of Omnipotence; but there may be Contradictions which we apprehend as real, that in truth are but seeming ones, and particularly when we cannot fully comprehend the nature of both the Terms or Objects; and it's already concluded, that in matters of Revelation *Reason* will often direct us to suspect our Judgments, and esteem 'em as such: And then, I hope, there's "no Absurdity in Pronouncing, seeming Contradictions and Impossibilities, a proper Subject of God's "Omnipotence: Thus far our Saviour will bear us out, for *all things* "*are possible with God*, Matt. xix. 26.

But, to pursue him a little further, he tells us, *N.* 16. speaking of God's Re-

Revelations, [*His Words muſt be intelligible, and the Matter poſſible. And as for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the* Revelation *of* GOD, *than from that of Man, for the conceiv'd Ideas of Things are the only Subjects of believing, and therefore all Matters reveal'd by* GOD *or Man, muſt be equally intelligible and poſſible: We are then to expect the ſame degree of Perſpicuity* (he means, with reſpect to the knowledge of the Object) *from* GOD *as from Man, tho' more of Certitude from the firſt than the laſt:* he means with reſpect to the Veracity of the Publiſher.]

Anſw. What has already been deliver'd upon Matters of Revelation, I hope, will ſatisfie any reaſonable Man, how far a reveal'd Truth is requir'd to be intelligible. It's concluded, GOD has diſcover'd ſo much of the Nature of reveal'd Truths as is uſeful or neceſſary; and conſequently, He has, at leaſt, diſcover'd ſo much as is ſufficient to inform us, upon Principles of Revelation, what He propoſes to our Belief, but He did not intend to make us Philoſophers, ſo as

to enable us to comprehend the *Modus* of reveal'd Truths, or form an Idea of the Manner of Existence, in order to believe the Truth of 'em. This we cannot pretend even in Physical Disquisitions; nay, I think, it's justly concluded, that in Matters of Revelation, which are for the most part Spiritual and Infinite, we are not to dispute the Possibility of their Existence, by measuring 'em by *Objects of Sence*; for, in reality, this is the same with comprehending the *Modus* of their Existence, "since we cannot "absolutely declare against the Possi- "bility of their Existence, without a "Faculty of comprehending and de- "termining the *Modus* of it, and pas- "sing an Estimate upon it as absurd "and impossible: And therefore we "say, That Matters of Revelation are "to be understood so far as to con- "ceive what GOD proposes to our "Belief, but not to comprehend the "*Modus* of their Existence; such *Ideas* "are not the necessary *Subjects* of "*Faith.*

Again, In Humane Revelation the Object is *Matters of Fact*, and things we

we attain to by the Testimony of our Senses, and consequently are things that lye within the proper Verge of Humane Understanding.

Again, They are Discoveries made by Persons upon the same level with ourselves, and, consequently, such as are not only liable to be mistaken, but may sometimes industriously lead others into Mistakes. And both these are Arguments that will engage us to demand an absolute Comprehension of the Nature of the Thing, and all its Circumstances; so that before we can come to a final Determination, or yield an Assent to the Truth of any such Relation, "We must compre-"hend the Nature of it so exactly, "as to be able to judge, not only of "the Possibility, but Probability of "it. And, I hope, no one can have the Face to *demand* all this Evidence from GOD. Therefore we may conclude, against our Majesterial Reasoner, That the same degree of Perspicuity is not requir'd from GOD, as from Man. In a word, if we cannot form a perfect Idea of reveal'd Truths, much less of the *Modus* of their Exi-

ſtence, we cannot judge of the Poſſibility of 'em: If indeed we were able to form an Idea of the *Modus* of their Exiſtence, that will comport with common Notions, tho' this be not the true *Modus*, we may ſafely pronounce them poſſible; "but we "cannot pretend to reject the Poſſi- "bility of 'em, unleſs we could judge "of the real *Modus*, and ſhew, that "it's abſurd and impoſſible: There- fore we may conclude, that all Mat- ters reveal'd by GOD or Man, are not requir'd to be equally intelligible and poſſible.

But, to proceed, as for thoſe In- ſtances of Scripture, that follow in this or the next Chapter, to prove Chriſtianity a rational intelligible Religion; they only prove, That Reaſon is a concurring Inſtrument in embracing all religious Truths, not by teaching us to comprehend the Nature of 'em, but to engage our Aſſent, where we cannot fully com- prehend upon rational Motives and Convictions: "And we think we "act upon rational Motives and "Convictions in Matters of Revela-

"tion,

"tion, when we know as much of "the thing as satisfies us, what it is "GOD proposes to our belief, and "yet find some things contain'd in "'em incomprehensible in their own "nature, and rely upon God's Vera-"city, Power, Wisdom, and Good-"ness, rather than reject the whole, "because we know but in part. Nay further, in the case of Miracles, we grant, that Reason may judge of the reality of 'em, because they are Objects of Sence, and are to be examin'd by the Testimony of the Senses, by Ideas of Objects of Sence, and the Exercitations of Reason upon 'em, and because Miracles are the uncontroulable Demonstrations of the Spirit, or Means of Conviction, for proving the Divine Original of Revelation; " And we can freely grant, that " *Reason* must act by common No-"tions, to prove *Revelation* to be tru-"ly Divine: But when this is done, there's no Consequence that Reason must still measure reveal'd Truths by common Notions, and reject 'em if she cannot fully comprehend 'em, or if she cannot make 'em comport with common Notions; which is the thing

our Adversary labours to prove.

The remaining Instances, which only declare the Perspicuity of the *Moral Law* or *Christian Precepts,* an Ingenious Reader will presently discern how foreign and impertinent they are to his Design.

At the same rate he trifles, when he raises an Objection from the Corruption of *Humane Reason*; as if, by making his own Answers and Objections, he had vanquish'd all our Arguments, gain'd the Field, and might triumphantly maintain, *That there's nothing in the Christian Religion mysterious, or above Reason*; for, I do not anywhere find the Ch. of *England* fixes the Controversie on this Bottom, and therefore this is Reply enough to two of his Chapters, *viz.* 3, 4.

Sect. III. And now we come to the Third Section, where we are introduc'd with an Account of what's *mysterious* and *above Reason.* I shall for the most part take his own Accounts of it, and therefore shall not much dispute any thing in the first Chapt. only I cannot forbear to remark, how lame or imperfect, or, at least, industriously equi-

equivocal, all his Deſcriptions are: He gives us two Significations of a *Myſtery*, the firſt I ſhall not examin; his ſecond is, (I ſuppoſe he ſpeaks his own Opinion, elſe he ſhould have declar'd the contrary) [*It is made to ſignifie a thing of it's own nature inconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Ideas, tho' it be never ſo much reveal'd.*] Indeed, I think the firſt part of this Deſcription is a Myſtery; tho', I ſuppoſe, he means, in the nature of the thing, or by reaſon of its Immenſity, it's inconceivable to us, or with reſpect to Humane Comprehenſion; but then, who knows how far he intends to carry this, I mean, repreſent a Myſtery inconceivable? If he intends it ſo as that we can form no *manner of Idea* of it, then he impoſes a manifeſt Abſurdity upon the World; for no one ever called that a MYSTERY that we could have no Notion of; for, *ſuch a thing may be as well Nothing, as Myſtery, for any thing we can tell.* And therefore *Myſtery*, at leaſt, ſuppoſes *an Imperfect or Inadequate Idea*, (as appears from all thoſe Inſtances I have hither-

to

to produc'd) otherwise we could not know what God proposes to our Belief. But then, if we enquire further into the thing, and endeavour to unravel the *Modus* of its Existence, we can either form no distinct Idea, or, at least, none that will comport with common Notions. And thus far we affirm, That *Mysteries* are not to be judg'd of by our *ordinary Faculties* and *Ideas*, tho' never so clearly reveal'd. *N.* 1.

I proceed to *Chap.* 2. where, after having promis'd a wonderful Perspicuity in the Case before him, he affirms, [*That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a* Mystery.] Now truly I'm much of his Mind, for I'm perswaded that no Finite Understanding can conceive all the several Properties of any one Being, at once in a distinct view; This is the Peculiar of an All-wise GOD; and if an adequate Idea must imply a distinct view of every Property at once, and Mystery opposed to it, every thing must

Sect. 8.

be

be a Myſtery to every intelligent Being but GOD: So that here's a *Notion* rais'd, that proves nothing, and no one requires it. We will therefore paſs this as an Unphiloſophical Blunder, and deſcribe an adequate Idea to be what he aims at, *viz. A clear and diſtinct Idea of the Nature and Properties of an Object.* This (he contends) cannot be fairly *oppoſed to* MYSTERY, becauſe, in the Knowledge of Humane Bodies, GOD has ſufficiently anſwer'd the Ends and Deſigns of it, by enabling us to comprehend the principal Properties of Bodies, and the Uſes of 'em: And therefore what remains cannot be MYSTERY, *N.* 19, 20. This is truly a Reaſon which is more cogent on the other hand, as well in Philoſophical as Reveal'd Diſquiſitions: GOD has diſcover'd, or enabl'd us to comprehend, as much as is uſeful or neceſſary in both theſe Caſes; but, after all, we can pretend no further than ſome principal Properties: And ſince *Reaſon* tells us, there's a great deal undiſcover'd and incomprehenſible, we may juſtly affirm, That

there

there are *Mysteries* in *Nature*, as well as *Revelation*; so that we are beholden to him for his *Argument*, tho' he had no Friendly Design in it. Indeed, if he would be content to carry us no further than the force of his Argument naturally tends, we should presently joyn in an amicable Accommodation, which is in other terms no more than this: "There can be no "*Mystery* in *Revelation*, (he might "have added, nor in *rerum natura*) "I mean, in this Notion of it; be- "cause we know as much as our Fi- "nite Understandings are capable of, "or as much as is necessary or useful. If this may be admitted, it's a substantial Reason to conclude against the Possibility of a *Mystery*.

But we may say there are *Mysteries*, not because we know not as much as is necessary and useful, but *because after we know the principal Properties of Things, or as much as is necessary or useful, we can discern a great deal which we cannot comprehend.* And this holds good not only in Matters of *Revelation*, but *Nature* too. Our *Adversary* confesses as much; for tho'

we

we have a competent Idea of the *Properties* of *Bodies*, that is, as far as they are useful to us, yet we are not able to comprehend the *Modus* of their Operations, nor indeed the true Causes of a great many obvious Effects.

Again, In *reveal'd Truths* we can form, at least, an imperfect Idea of what GOD proposes to our belief. Thus we form an Idea of our *Saviour's Divinity*, from those Characters which *Revelation* and *Natural Reason* gives us of the *Godhead*. We believe him to be possess'd with the *fulness of the Godhead*, because the same Characters are ascrib'd to him that are ascrib'd to the *Father* in respect of the *Godhead*; but we cannot form an Idea of the Manner of the Union of this *Divinity* with *Humane Nature*, nor its Consistence with the *Unity* of the *Godhead*, at least so as to make it comport with common Notions: So that in respect of the *Modus* of things, whether as to their Existence or Operations, even in those of *Natural Bodies*, as well as *Matters of Revelation*, there are *Mysteries* in *Nature*,

(and

(and that properly) as well as in *Revelation.*

Our *Adversary* indeed would call this an *Inadequate Knowledge*, but nothing Mysterious or above Reason; but I hope to prove it a *Mystery* even in the received sence of the Word, as well as the reason of the Thing, and that too on his own *Concessions* and *Principles*. And,

1*st*, It's certain his Evasions concerning *Inadequate Ideas* will do him no service, to take off the Denominations of *Mystery*, or *above Reason*; for we affirm, That Things are *Mysterious*, and *above Reason*, because we can form but very imperfect and inadequate Ideas of 'em. "It's cer-
"tainly absurd to imagine that any
"thing can be *mysterious*, or *above*
"*Reason*, which we are able fully to
"comprehend; and it's equally ab-
"surd to say, that things are *mysteri-*
"*ous*, when we can form no Idea at
"all, since we can *pronounce nothing*
"when we *know nothing*: But, to
"confess, that of most things we can
"form but imperfect and inadequate
"*Ideas*, is to prove a thing to be *my-*
"*sterious*;

" *ſterious*; for, if we know and ac-
" knowledge, that our moſt improv'd
" Ideas are inadequate, we muſt con-
" clude there's ſomething behind, ei-
" ther as to the *Modus* or *Rationale* of
" Things, which Reaſon cannot com-
" prehend. And I know no better denomination, than to ſay, That Things are in this reſpect *myſterious*, or *above Reaſon*.

To make up the ſtrict Notion of *Myſtery*, we are not to conſider the Neceſſity or Uſefulneſs of what we cannot comprehend; but the grand Queſtion is, *Whether there are not Modes and Properties of Things, that by reaſon of the Imperfection of Human Underſtanding, or the Immenſity or Intricacy of the Things 'emſelves, cannot be comprehended by us?* 'For it is the 'Abſtruſeneſs or Inacceſſibility of 'Things that make the *Myſteries*, 'not the Neceſſity or Uſefulneſs of 'what is incomprehenſible. And therefore if there be Things in this material World which we cannot comprehend, we may truly affirm, That there's a *Myſtery* in *Nature*, or that *Natural Cauſes* or *Effects* are thus far

far *above Reason*, or *mysterious*; much more may we affirm it of Matters of *Revelation*: And therefore, to use the Instance of a vain insulting Adversary, *Tho' we live upon Water, and see and handle it daily, there may and do something in it* mysterious, *and* above Reason, *inasmuch as we cannot form an* Idea *of every thing that truly belongs to it*. And yet no wise Man will be tempted to make such a practical Inference as this Reasoner hath suggested, that is, *resolve* never to enquire into its Nature, nor imploy it in his House or Grounds *. But, in Matters of Revelation, we know how inadequate our Ideas are, 'as much 'as *Finite* differs from *Infinite*, *Negative* from *Positive*, and *Sence* from 'Spirit: Must they not then con-'tain things *above Reason*, because 'they are only thus inadequate?

*See Sect. 3. N. 10.

But further, As for the original Import of the word MYSTERY, I am not concern'd to trace it in the primitive Uses of it, it's sufficient if by Custom it hath obtain'd another Import (it may be) every jot as proper as the former. Our Author owns, that

that in approved Claſſicks it's commonly taken for obſcure and intricate Matters, ſuch as cannot well be comprehended or ſeen into *. And this, I think, is equally proper with that other deſcrib'd by him, which implies ſomething beyond a Veil, not diſcernable till that is remov'd: And in this ſence the Types under the *Moſaick* Law he accounts *Myſteries*; for thoſe which thro' the Imperfections or Weakneſs of Reaſon, or the Immenſity, Diſtance, or Intricacy of the Object, may be as little diſcern'd as thoſe that have a Veil over 'em; and then they ſeem to be equally *myſterious*, and *above Reaſon*. In a word, *Myſtery* is ſomething ſhut up from our View or Cognizance, and it is not material whether this be done by a Veil or other Impediments or Obſtructions; and conſequently *Myſtery* and an *Inadequate Idea* may be very conſiſtent; I do not mean, that which ariſes from affected Ignorance, but the Intricacy of the Object, and the Weakneſs of Humane Reaſon under its higheſt Improvements.

* See *N.* 5. *Sect.* 3.

But, to clear up his Understanding in this matter, by a few Arguments drawn from his own Positions, the Riches of his own inexhausted Brain, he tells us, *Cap.*3. *N.*27. That *certain Gospel-Doctrines are call'd* Mysteries, *with respect to the* Jews, [*not that they knew nothing of 'em, but they were not clearly and fully reveal'd till the New Testament-times, being veil'd before by various Typical Representations,* &c.] Well, you see he allows *Mosaick* Types to be *Mysteries*, and gives the reason, Because they saw 'em thro a Veil; or, in St. *Paul's* Language, with respect to further Discoveries, *thro a Glass darkly*: And what is this, but that they knew them in part, or by inadequate Ideas? I'm sure our Knowledge is as much cramp'd in several of those Instances produc'd by our Author, from the Intricacy and Immensity of the Things 'emselves, as those *Gospel-truths* shut up from the *Jews* by the *Mosaick* Veil of Types and Figures: 'And conse-'quently, why is not the one as much 'a *Mystery* to us, as the other to the 'Jews, and for this very reason, be-

'cause

'cauſe we know them inadequately.

But, to go a little further with him, I remember, in the State of his Queſtion, as well as in other places, he gives us to underſtand, That *all Reveal'd Matters may be judg'd of even by common Notions, both as to their Manner and Exiſtence, as eaſily as the ordinary* Phœnomena *of Nature*; and therefore concludes, That *there's nothing in the Goſpel contrary to Reaſon, or above it*; and, That *no Chriſtian Doctrine can be properly call'd a* Myſtery. This is the State of the Queſtion; and what he aſſerts muſt be a Criterion, in judging what is *myſterious* or *above Reaſon*: So that we may hence conclude, and that upon his *own* Principles too, That that *Thing* whoſe Manner or Exiſtence cannot be conceiv'd, even with as much eaſe and clearneſs as the ordinary *Phœnomena* of Nature, is a *Myſtery*, and *above Reaſon*. Certainly here is a fair Conceſſion, and ſuch as will make things *myſterious*, becauſe we can but form inadequate Ideas; for, as this Author confeſſes, we can form Ideas of the Beings of Things, and know as much

as is useful from their Properties and Effects, whilst we are ignorant of the manner of their Existence or Production: See *N.* 8, 11. —— (the one of Plants, and the other of Rain). Here he manifestly fixes our inadequate Ideas upon the *Modus* of Things, with respect to their Operations and Existence; that is, our Ideas are inadequate, because we cannot decipher wherein their *Modus* consists, tho' we know their principal Properties by their Effects and Uses.

And now we may call in his own Principles to conclude against him, and affirm, That inadequate Ideas must necessarily imply a *Mystery*, for inadequate Ideas imply our Ignorance as to the *Modus* of Things, and that thing whose *Modus* cannot be comprehended, according to his own Principles, is *mysterious*, and *above Reason*. Here, I think, he pretends to *Out-do* the most improv'd Arts of *Priestcraft*, whilst he declares for nothing but *Reason*, and banishes *Mystery* out of the World, and yet imposes things that surpass the highest *Mystery*; since he labours to make the World

World embrace his *Contradictions for the undoubted Decrees of Reason:* [*This is*, in his own language, *trifling with a witness, or pitiful shifting or fooling, or what not, and such as discovers a mighty Scarcity of good Arguments*, N. 13.] But he hath not done with us yet, and therefore concludes with an obliging Proposal, [*If they will still be fooling, and call these things* Mysteries, *I'm willing to admit as many as they please in Religion, if they will allow me likewise to make mine as intelligible to others as these are to me*, Ib.]

I hope I have made good the first part, *That there are true and proper Mysteries, even in the Schools of Nature.* And, if so, it's manifest, notwithstanding his vain Triumphs, we have an Argument *à majori*, That there are *Mysteries* in *Revelation:* I say, it's *a majori* to every one but him, that has the Face to assert, That *an infinite incomprehensible Spirit is an Object equally intelligible with Objects of Sence, or with Wood or Stone.* As for the last part of his Proposals, I believe every one will consent, 'That 'he shall make all those *reveal'd*

'*Truths* we call *Mysteries*, as intelli-
'gible as he's able, provided he'll
'promise not to reject 'em, because
'he fails in his Undertaking; or, in a
'word, because he cannot make them
'compare with common Ideas or No-
'tions.

And now, I hope, I have said enough to invalidate all the Arguments of this Chapter. But lest he should think me rude, or that I neglect him too much, I shall make some short Returns to a few Passages that are yet behind. And,

1*st*, He instructs us what it is to comprehend a Thing, *viz.* [*When its chief Properties, and their several Uses, are known to us; for to comprehend, in all correct Authors, is nothing else but to know; and as of what is not knowable we can have no Idea, so is it nothing to us.* I shall, for once, admit, that in the common Notion of Humane Perception or Comprehension, we think we know or comprehend a Thing sufficiently, when its chief Properties, and their several Uses, are known to us; but may we not at the same time discern, that

there

there are others we cannot conceive, and that the *Modus* or preciſe Nature of thoſe we know are inconceivable: And ſo we may, without Offence, or in a ſtrict and proper way of Speech, affirm, That there's a great deal *myſterious* in the thing, and *above Reaſon*; and yet we do not pronounce it *above Reaſon*, (as he ſuggeſts, *ib.*) becauſe we know no more than concerns us; but becauſe there's ſomething inconceivable, tho' to conceive it does not ſo directly concern us.

But, *2dly*, as for that which is *myſterious* even in Matters of Revelation, we do not pretend that it is any thing to us; I mean, as if we were oblig'd to comprehend or define the preciſe *Modus* of the thing; *This is to be a Myſtery and no Myſtery.* However, ſince we diſcern in certain *reveal'd Truths* ſomething which we cannot comprehend, we may believe thoſe *reveal'd Truths* to be ſo far *myſterious*, 'and they ſo far concern us, as to pay 'the Obedience of Faith to 'em, and 'not reject the Whole, becauſe we 'cannot comprehend Every-thing 'that belongs to 'em. This ought

to be an Eternal Rule to our Author in matters of Revelation, becauſe it's founded upon his own Words and Principles: We believe the Divinity of our Saviour, becauſe we have not only its Uſes ſet forth, but we have it repreſented in the principal Properties of the Godhead, even ſuch as are aſcrib'd to GOD the Father; and conſequently, in the Sence of this Author, we may be ſaid to comprehend or know this Divine Truth. Therefore if any thing ariſes as to the *Modus* of its Exiſtence, or otherwiſe, that is *myſterious*, (not knowable, or of which we can have no Idea) his own Rule directs him, that this is nothing to him, and conſequently is by no means to be an Argument againſt this Divine Truth: I'm ſure, if 'tis not ridiculous not to ſuperſede our Diſquiſitions in matters that do not directly concern us, (another *Aſſertion* of his, *ib.*) *it's undoubtedly ridiculous to make Diſquiſitions in ſuch Caſes, and make them an Argument for rejecting the cleareſt reveal'd Truths*; which is the conſtant Practice of the *Modern Reaſoners* or *Diſputers* of this World, the *Socinians*. But,

But, to proceed, the next thing remarkable is, a compendious Rule to acquire Uſeful Knowledge, *N.* 11. *viz. Not to trouble ourſelves nor others with what is Uſeleſs were it known, or what is impoſſible to be known at all.* Whereas in the Paragraph immediately preceeding, he ſeems to charge us with ſaying, That *Things are above Reaſon, becauſe we know no more than concerns us, or is uſeful.* And yet allowing this Notion, he tells us, that *it is ridiculous to ſuperſede our Diſquiſitions about it upon that Score*; that is, according to his own Notion, tho' we know as much of it as concerns us, or is uſeful. A bleſs'd Law-giver truly, to inſtitute Contradictions almoſt with the ſame Breath; for, I think, he cannot avoid the Charge, without flying to that which is as abominable in his very Thoughts as this reproachful to his Reaſon; I mean, by Pleading he intended a *Myſtery*.

And now, having given you enough of the Doctrinal part, he carries us to Application; but truly, I hope I have diſabled him ſo viſibly

in

in the former, as superſedes the Neceſſity of a formal Reply to the latter. I ſhall only recite the Application he has made, and rather refer than anſwer; [1ſt, *That no Chriſtian Doctrin, no more than any ordinary piece of Nature, can be reputed a* Myſtery, *becauſe we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it.*] As for what may be attributed to inadequate Ideas, I have ſaid enough in this Chapter; and tho' we may not ſay, 'That the want of an adequate Idea 'is the *formalis ratio* that conſtitutes 'a *Myſtery*, yet our Inabilities in com-'prehending ſome things that are 'really lodg'd in it, or really belong to 'it, makes it a *Myſtery*; and as is already prov'd with as good reaſon as thoſe things he counts *myſterious*, *viz.* Intelligible Truths beyond the Veil.

2*dly*, [*What is reveal'd in Religion, as it is moſt uſeful and neceſſary, ſo it muſt and may be as eaſily comprehended, and found as conſiſtent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, or the like.*] We certainly agree, That GOD hath only reveal'd as much as is neceſſary or uſe-

ful;

ful; and, in matters of pure Revelation, no more than will give us an Idea of the Thing, or what it is GOD propoſes to our Belief; and therefore make this an Argument, that there are Things that belong to it, of which we cannot form a diſtinct Idea, and, conſequently, from hence give it the Denomination of being *Myſterious*.

Now, as for the *myſterious* part of any *reveal'd Truth*, we affirm, That it exceeds our Comprehenſion, otherwiſe the *Myſtery* muſt ceaſe: But, as it exceeds our Comprehenſion, ſo we ſay, it is not neceſſary to be comprehended; much leſs do we allow, that it may be comprehended by common Ideas or Notions, or ſcann'd by theſe Ideas: So as that, in caſe it doth not correſpond with 'em, we cannot call in queſtion the Truth of what is reveal'd and comprehended.

No, here, in caſe Curioſity tempts us to dive into the myſterious part of any reveal'd Truth, and upon the cloſeſt Reſearches, we find ourſelves unable to comprehend; 'We are to 'adhere to the Subſtance of the 'Truth,

'Truth, where we cannot compre-
'hend the *Modus* of it; or, in other
'Terms, adore, where we cannot
'comprehend. But as to our com-
prehending by common Notions, or, as easily as we can comprehend, Wood, or Stone, or the like, I observe,

1st, This Gentleman makes all Objects of Humane Knowledge equally comprehensible. And,

2dly, That we may take our Measures for comprehending any one, by those Idea's we have formed of others; but I have elsewhere sufficiently discovered the Falseness of both these Assertions; and there I shall not enlarge, but rest upon the Conclusiveness of what hath been offered.

3dly, *When we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines as what is known of Natural Things (which I pretend we can) we may then be as* * *properly said to comprehend the one as the other.*

* See *N.* 12. *Sect.* 3.

This is a very bold Undertaking, and not to be believed 'till he gives us good Reason, and nothing less than Matter of Fact for Demonstration, espe-

especially if he intends that part of those Doctrines we justly call *mysterious*. But then, in using this Familiarity, 'We must engage him not 'to explain away the Substance of 'any Doctrine, nor to reject the Do-'ctrine, if he fails in his Explication. And now we come to attack him in his Strong-hold, that is, his Appeal to the Voice of Scripture: * And truly Scripture is an unquestionable Tribunal for the Decision of all Controversies in Matters of Revelation; and as to their present Controversies, as far as Scripture can determine, every one may desire to put the Case on this Issue, and Appeal to this Tribunal (as well as he) provided he is satisfied Scripture is on his side; and he may with greater satisfaction be reputed Orthodox with this on his side, than to pass for Orthodox with the whole World, and have it against him. But then in case he either mistakes the Sence of Scripture, or has recourse to it, to make it come up to the State of his Case, and prove more than what can be inferr'd from it; it's very bold to say, that Scripture

* See *Cap.* 3. *Sect.* 3.

pture has engaged him in this *Error*, if it be one: Here I'm sure Scripture will be no Protection to him, against a just *Charge of Error*, because he makes an Appeal to her, and retreats under her Wing for Shelter; when in reality he charges his own false Reasonings, or the Arguments of some particular Passions, not to say unjust Propositions on Scripture, as if all were the unerring Counsels and Dictates of *Divine Truth*. And truly this Reasoner does little less, when he attempts to prove, that there are no *Mysteries in Christianity*, because he endeavours to shew, that the word *Mystery* in the *New Testament*, is no where applied to the *Thing* we contend for, *viz.* a *Thing* that with respect to *Humane Reason*, contains something in it altogether *incomprehensible*: For is it not absurd to argue against a *Thing* from the signification of a Word, which might never have been used in Scripture, and yet the *Thing* found there? and tho' it is used, yet our Author, pursuant to the *Mind of Scripture*, fixes Three several *Significations* on it,

and

and consequently it can be no Argument that it hath not a Fourth; because it does not appear in Scripture; unless he could prove that the *Holy Ghost* thought it necessary to reveal all the Notions or Acceptations of the word *Mystery*; therefore if this Advocate for Reason allows the whole Case, as he pretends, to be put upon this Issue, it will presently be given against him, for want of a good Consequence. So that in truth, if the Controversie is to be determined by Scripture, (as no doubt it ought) it must unavoidably turn upon this issue, 'Whether there are not Truths 'set forth in Scripture, in which, if 'we enquire into the Nature of 'em, 'a great deal is contain'd in 'em, 'which we cannot comprehend, and 'consequently are *mysterious*, and '*above Reason*; whether Scripture 'deliver 'em under these Denomina-'tions or no.

This may be true, tho' the Word *Mystery* were no where to be found in Scripture, or tho' Scripture had not so much as hinted, that there were any thing *mysterious* or *incom-*

pre-

prehensible. If this can be proved, our Adversary must acknowledge, that there are Mysteries in Christianity still. The Instances of our Saviour's Incarnation already produced, move upon this Supposition; and I shall be ready to prove it, whenever he shall think fit to impugn the Truth of it. But besides this, I shall in some measure condescend to his own Method, and tho' I shall not Examine every Passage of Scripture, to see whether he has rightly stated the Signification of the Word, yet I do not question, but we may offer as strong Arguments to apply it sometimes to the Sence we contend for, as he hath done for another; and besides this, I hope to produce some Passages of Scripture, that assure us there are still those things in Christianity, we properly call *Mysteries*; and if this be performed, I hope it may without Affectation be said, that his Appeal to the Tribunal of Scripture is defeated.

And, 1*st*, because I do not design Opposition, or Disputes, for Opposition's sake; I shall own that the Word

Word MYSTERY is uſed in the ſeveral Senſes he hath put upon it.

I. For the Goſpel in general.

II. For ſome unfolded Secrets. And,

III. For things veil'd by Parables: but this is by no means an Argument that there is no other ſignification to be found in Scripture: for I am perſwaded, I can prove the contrary, with as much Authority and Force of Reaſon as he can produce againſt it; I mean, that it's ſometimes uſed to expreſs the Incomprehenſibleneſs of certain Truths, tho' reveal'd. And,

1. That *Myſtery* muſt imply ſomething that is in the Nature of it to us incomprehenſible, St. *Paul* ſeems to have aſſured us, *But we ſpeak the Wiſdom of God in a Myſtery, even the hidden Wiſdom of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 7. All ſides agree, that the Apoſtle points at the Fundamental Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and particularly the Redemption of the World by Jeſus Chriſt, and more primarily the moſt abſtruſe part of it, his Incarnation.

2. It's viſible the Apoſtle ſpeaks of it as *a Myſtery, even when he reveals*

veals it; for he reveals the Wisdom of God in a *Mystery*. He now speaks to the Perfect, that had own'd the Gospel, and the Divine Authority of his Preaching, as appears from the preceding Verse; and it's their peculiar to have the Meat of the Word, or the *Mysteries* of the Kingdom of GOD, communicated to 'em; and therefore, tho' this Wisdom of GOD be a *Mystery*, and consequently he delivers it as such, yet the Perfect believe, when they cannot comprehend, because it is the Wisdom of GOD: I am sure this Notion is agreeable to the Judgment of *Clemens Alexandrinus*; for he uses the very Word of the Apostle, and calls it, Τὴν ἐν μυστηρίῳ κεκαλυμμένην σοφίαν, ἣν προώρισεν ὁ υἱὸς τῷ Θεῷ; nay, he makes this an Argument, why the Fundamental Truths of the Gospel should only be communicated to the Pure and Perfect, ἐπικρύπτεσθαι ἐν τῷ ἐν μυστηρίῳ, &c. *ut supra, Strom. Lib.* 1. And therefore since the Apostle reveals it in a *Mystery*, *it must be so, because it contains something in it that is incomprehensible.* Hence we may justly Vindicate our

English

Engliſh Tranſlation, which does not joyn, τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην τὸ ἐν μυστηίῳ, as our *Adverſary* would have it; but makes it a Repetition, or Enlargement upon the *Divine Wiſdom*, viz. even the *Hidden Wiſdom*. It's true, our *Adverſary* endeavours to evade this Expoſition, becauſe we are told in the 10th Verſe, *But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit*: But the Words manifeſtly referr to thoſe Things, which, in the preceding Verſe, God is ſaid to have prepared for them that love him, which are chiefly the Benefits of our Redemption, and the Conſequent of this fundamental Revelation; or at leaſt, if it muſt be this fundamental Inſtance of Divine Wiſdom, it is only reveal'd ſo as to let us know, what God intends by it, and aſſures us of the Truth of it, but not to comprehend the whole Nature of it; or in a word, it is ſo reveal'd, as any other thing is reveal'd in a *Myſtery*; that is, when ſomething remains in it, that is not to be comprehended; ſo that, in Truth, here's *Myſtery* in two Sences:

1st, With respect to the Incomprehensibleness of the Thing. And,

2dly, With respect to the Thing before it was communicated to us.

And thus far not only the Natural Construction of the Words, but the Authority of a Learned Expositor carries us, *Vid. Theophilact. in locum,* Μυστήριον καλεῖ, τὸ κατὰ τὸν Χριστὸν κήρυγμα, εἰ γὰρ καὶ κήρυγμά ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μυστήριόν ἐστιν, καθὸ οὐδὲ Ἄγγελοι ἤδεσαν αὐτὸ πρὶν γενέσθαι, καὶ καθὸ ἄλλο βλήποντες, ἄλλο νοοῦμεν.

But Secondly, I shall insist on that noble Passage of St. *Paul* to *Timothy*, *Ep.* 1. *Cap.* 3. *Ver.* 10. 'And without 'Controversie, great is the Mystery 'of Godliness; God was manifested 'in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, 'seen of Angels, preached unto the '*Gentiles*, believed on in the World, 'received up into Glory. It's observable, our Adversary expounds as accurately, as he reasons; for he produces this for his eighth Passage, where *Mystery* is put for the Gospel in general, whereas it's manifest the Words cannot, without the greatest Violence, be applyed to any thing but a *Divine Person*, *represented under*

der certain Divine Characters, and indeed to none but our Saviour, the Corner-Stone of the Goſpel, but not the Goſpel; for truly the Apoſtle ſeems, in this place, to have given a deſcription of his whole Mediation. I am ſure the Current of the Fathers, as well as of after Commentators, apply it to none but our Saviour. But now ſince our Saviour's Incarnation is this *Myſtery* of Godlineſs, it's evident the Apoſtle does not ſpeak *of what it was before it was reveal'd, but what it is after it is preached and believed on in the World*, and therefore he calls it a *Myſtery*, not becauſe it was ſo before it was reveal'd, but becauſe it ſtill remains ſo; and thereupon he endeavours to repreſent it as ſuch, by inlarging upon the Nature and Incomprehenſibleneſs of it; God was manifeſt in Fleſh, the Foundation of this *Myſtery*, the following Characters being only their Appendages that take their riſe and concenter in it. This is an Expoſition that diſcovers itſelf ſo clearly, that we find our Adverſary induſtriouſly huddling up this

Passage, as it were, in a *Mystery*, without giving any tolerable account of it; and at last is forced to confess, That the gracious Manifestation of Christ and his Gospel, is to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing, *N.* 30. So that we plainly read *Mystery* in the very Sence we contend for: I am sure we have the Opinion of some Ancient Church-Writers to ratifie it. Of this Opinion we find *Athanasius* in his Tract against *Paulus Samosatenus de Incarnatione Verbi*, where he gives his Judgment, *è Cathedra*, as Archbishop of *Alexandria*; for first he lays open the Attempts of this Heretick, in endeavouring to Subvert the Doctrine of our Saviour's Incarnation, and stiles it, Μέγα μυστήριον [τὸ μέγα μυστήριον ἀναιρεῖται;] and to prove it such, cites this very place of our Apostle. Secondly, He represents the danger in attempting to unfold such profound Difficulties, that are only with safety to us believed, and in a word, enjoyns us to adhere to the *Apostolick Faith*, without admitting new *Terms* or *Notions*, Τὴν παραδοθεῖσαν πίστιν φυλάττειν, ἐκπίπτειν δὲ τὰς βεβήλους καινοφωνίας, and above all,

φοβεῖσθαι

φοβεῖσθαι τὴν περὶ τοῦ τελικούτου μυστηρίου ζήτησιν, to dread the Diſquiſition of ſuch a *Myſtery*. But beſides the Opinion of this great Man, we have the Comment of *Iſiodore* the *Peluſiote*, and *Theophilact*, fixing the *Myſtery* of *Godlineſs* in the *Incomprehenſibleneſs* of it. Thus the former, *Lib.* 2. *Ep.* 192. οὗ ὡς ἀγνοούμενον παντάπασιν, ἀλλὰ ὡς οὐδενὶ ἄφικτον, παντὸς γὰρ ἐπέκεινα καὶ λόγου καὶ νοῦ καθέστηκεν, and purſuant to this, expoſtulates, Who can comprehend the Miracle of his Conception, tranſacted without Coition, or imagine how the Divine Nature can be circumſcrib'd, that is Immenſe, and not to be circumſcrib'd? And *Theophilact* proceeds in the ſame Strain thus, Ἄλλως τε τὸ μὲν ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἐσαρκώθη πάντες ἴσασιν, τὸ δὲ πῶς ἀποκέκρυπται διὰ τοῦτο μυστήριόν ἐστιν, *in Locum*. And now this is ſomething more certainly than calling it a *Myſtery*, with reſpect to the Ages preceding the Goſpel; for I think this Paſſage in itſelf admits of the Expoſition before us more naturally, than that our Adverſary contends for; beſides we have the Authority of the Learned in paſt Ages. And

since I have made it appear he has no advantage over us in his whole Hypothesis, I know not why we may not in his own Language pronounce against him, that *Mystery* in the New Testament, is sometimes put for a thing inconceivable in itself, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions, however reveal'd. This likewise calls to mind the Triumphs of our Adversary upon a Passage, which as we allow, stiles the Gospel a *Mystery*, under this Notion; it's *Rom.* 16. 25. — *But is now made manifest*, whereupon he Expostulates, In what sence could this Secret be made manifest, if it remain'd still Incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed, to bless the World with a parcel of Unintelligible Notions. I confess, I incline to the former sence, I mean a *Mystery*, with respect to the Ages preceding the Gospel, but can see no foundation for Absurdities, no more than for his vain Triumphs, if we take it in the Sence he pretends to explode; for this Reasoner, had he not been too much used to confound things together,

gether, might have learn'd, that the higheſt *Myſtery* is not wholly unintelligible; and it may be properly ſaid, to be manifeſted in as much as God has communicated by the Apoſtle's preaching what's uſeful and neceſſary, and as much as will inform us what God propoſes to our Belief: 'Again it's *manifeſted*, and that too 'to our unſpeakable Comfort, ſince 'the vaſt Deſigns of Divine Love, 'and the unexpreſſible Benefits to 'us-ward in it, are abundantly laid 'open; and I think theſe are Fa'vours or Bleſſings too rich to be ex'poſed in Ridicule or Burleſque.

But further, If the uſe of the Word in Scripture will not prove the thing we contend for, there are ſufficient hints in Scripture to prove it; I ſhall firſt inſiſt on St. *Paul*'s Accounting the preaching of Chriſt unto the *Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them which are called, the Power of God and the Wiſdom of God*, 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.

Now this place is generally interpreted of the Incarnation of Chriſt, or the Union of the two Natures into

to one Divine Person: And those that embrace and believe it, must resolve it into the Infinite Power and Wisdom of God, not as a common, but special Act, and consequently a thing incomprehensible as they are; and on this account, it's to the *Greeks*, the great Masters of Reason, Foolishness; because, as it is represented to us, it contains in it, Things that can never be reconciled with common Notions, or Ideas. What common Ideas can satisfie us, that the Son of God should speak by a Man, or as the Sacred Canon hath it, in the form of a Man; that God should have a Son, and that he should suffer as the Son of God? What common Ideas can represent to us, that Christ could have a Being before the Worlds, as God; that he should be born a Man, and exist as such, and yet not as a Man, begotten of a Man? These things, the most improved Notices of Natural Reason cannot confirm, or warrant, no not our Adversary with all his Reason. If any thing, it's the *Arian*, or *Socinian* Hypothesis (tho' advanced contrary

to

to the Current of Scripture) that may pretend moſt to be a Rationale in this matter. And yet our Adverſary ſeems to explode this as much as that of the *Trinitarians*, becauſe they are forced to allow Divine Worſhip to be paid him, [*Cap.* 1. *Sect.* 2. *N.*2. *I am miſtaken if either they, or the* Arians *can make their Notions of a dignified, and Creature-God, capable of Divine Worſhip, appear more reaſonable, than the Extravagancies of other Sects, touching the Article of the Trinity.*] But to return, It's manifeſt here we learn how the Doctrines of Chriſtianity came to be branded with the Imputation of Fooliſhneſs, viz. *Becauſe they will not comport with common Notices, or the received Principles of Natural Philoſophy*: for I have evinced it, upon the Objection of *Trypho* againſt *Juſtin*, and St. *Clement*'s Comment on the place, Τὸ γὰρ λέγειν σὲ πρεσβύτερον εἶναι Θεὸν ὄντα πρὸ αἰώνων τοῦτον τὸν χείρονα εἶτα καὶ γενηθῆναι, ἄνθρωπον γενόμενον, ἀνυμέναιος, καὶ ἔτι ἐκ ἀνθρώπου ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, ἃ μόνον παράδοξον δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ μωρόν. *Dial. cum Trypho*, p. 269.

And

And St. *Clement*, *in locum*, thus, *Lib.* 1. *Stromat.* Ἕλλησι δὲ μωρίαν μυθῶδες ἡγοῦνται οἱ δοκησίσοφοι διά τε ἀνθρώπου τὸν Θεοῦ λαλεῖν, τόν τε ἔχειν τὸ Θεὸν, καὶ δὲ καὶ πεπονθέναι τοῦτον. Here we see this great Man does not charge the *Greeks* with false Principles of Philosophy, as the Ground of their Error, for he represents the Thing as much inconsistent with such *principles* as they could, and makes this the Foundation of their unjust Charge, I mean in pronouncing the Doctrines of Christianity Foolishness; and indeed he calls 'em δοκησίσοφοι, but it can be on no other account, than because they would admit of nothing but *Natural Reason*, and *Philosophy*, and thereupon would try all revealed Truths by common Notions, or Principles of Philosophy, and reject 'em as absurd and foolish, because they could not make these deep Things of God to comport with common Ideas of Objects of Sence. Indeed *Celsus* objects much the same things against *Origen*; for upon every turn, he endeavours to ridicule the *Divinity of our Saviour*, by representing it inconsistent

ſiſtent with the Principles of *Natural Reaſon*: And now give me leave to make one ſingle Remark, ſince it occurs ſo naturally: Are not theſe the very Principles which our Advocate for *Reaſon* moves upon? So that an unprejudiced Perſon might ſuſpect that I'm dealing with a *Celſus*, or a *Trypho*; or that they were riſen from the Dead. But to conclude this Argument, it's manifeſt St. *Clemens* muſt believe, That the Fundamental Doctrine of the *Chriſtian Religion*, ſtill contains in it ſomething that cannot be comprehended by *Natural Reaſon*, that cannot be reconciled to common Ideas, or Principles of Natural Philoſophy, and conſequently ſomething that's *Myſterious and above Reaſon*: And therefore if this Reverend Father is not miſtaken in the purport of the *Holy Ghoſt* (as we have good Reaſon to conclude, he is not) the *New Teſtament* does contain the Thing (if not the Word) we contend for, I mean, propoſes to our Belief, Things that are Incomprehenſible, or above the Comprehenſion of Human Reaſon.

The

The last Argument I shall produce, is two or three Passages of Scripture, which (because they bear an Affinity to one another) I shall examine and conclude them under one Argument.

I begin with St. *Paul*'s account of Humane Knowledge, even under this last State of Revelation; for he includes himself, and the whole College of *Apostles*, who undoubtedly enjoyed the *Special Assistance of the Spirit of God*; nay, St. *Paul* had been *caught up into the Third Heaven*, where he was almost *overwhelm'd with abundance of Revelations*, 2 Cor. 12. And yet he tells us, *We know but in part, and we Propheſie in part*, 1 Cor. Cap. 13. ver. 9. and the Reason assigned is, *We see through a Glass darkly*, ver. 12. so that the Impediment seems to lie upon the Mind, or the Immenseness of the Object, not in God that denies us a competent Revelation; for this is the last Revelation of himself; and therefore this Glass argues an Imperfection, or Inability in comprehending some of those Truths that are revealed; but if

if this Glass be a Veil which God casts before our Eyes, like that upon the *Jews*, in as much as he does not impart in this Life a clear Discovery of certain *Gospel-Truths*, then, according to the Mind of our Author, there are still *Mysteries* in the Gospel, in the highest Sence; but truly St. *Clemens* fixes it upon the Imperfections of Humane Knowledge, since he represents the Mind in this Earthly Tabernacle, as viewing Things through Sences after a gross corporeal manner, whereas in another World our Knowledge will be highly enlarged, for then it will be Face to Face; or, as he expresses it, Κατὰ μόνας ἐκείνας τὰς διεξιούσης, καὶ ἀσωμάτους τῆς διανοίας ὁπτασίας: That is, by a pure and naked Application of the Mind, or Intuition.

Again, it's manifest the Object of this Imperfect Knowledge, is the deep things of God, or, in plain terms, the fundamental Revelations of the Gospel; for, the Apostle must at least comprehend, if not principally intend them, when he tells us, *And we Prophesie but in part*; that is, those *Truths* we

we publish to the World are only reveal'd in part, since we can only pretend to know or comprehend them in part. And truly St. *Clement* asserts as much of St. *Paul* himself, notwithstanding his abundance of Revelations, for thus, on his words 2 *Cor*.xii.4. (where, no doubt, he receiv'd the chiefest Instructions of his Apostolick Office) *He was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for Man to utter*; he observes, that there was no Law nor Precept given that obliged him to stifle any of those Christian Truths God had committed to him; so that in saying, *it is not lawful*, he intended to represent the Ineffability of the Divine Nature, or the things of God; Τὸ Ἄῤῥητον τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀνισσόμενος, or, δυνάμει δὲ ἁγίᾳ ἄφθεγγον εἶναι τὸ Θεῖον μηνύων. And, to confirm this Notion, he cites three Passages that represent the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, *Rom*. xi. 33. *Oh! the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God!* And again, *But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery*: [*That is, even when we speak*

speak it, else it proves nothing in this place,] 1 Cor. ii. 7. And lastly, *Colos.* ii. *Ver.* 23. To the Acknowledgment of the *Mystery* of *God* in *Christ*, [*as you have it in the Ancient Readings*] in whom are hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom, or Knowledge. This is a very remarkable Passage, and therefore I must beg leave to enlarge upon it.

As for the Sence of St. *Clement*, it's visible he looks upon it to be a *Mystery*, tho' reveal'd and acknowledg'd, and to be a *Mystery* because it contains something in it which is Ἄῤῥητον ἀφθεγγον, or ἀπόκρυπτον, for otherwise it can be no Argument to prove what he had just before asserted. Indeed, our Adversary thinks he has evaded the Force of this Exposition, by telling us, (without any tolerable Proof) That *the Words are to be understood of the Gospel of* CHRIST; but if it be the Gospel of CHRIST, it may be stiled a MYSTERY, in respect of its Fundamental Truths, inasmuch as they contain in 'em something that's hidden or mysterious; for thus much the following Verse apparently hints,

ἐν ᾧ, [*i. e.* in which, if this Exposition obtains] *are hidden* ἀπόκρυφοι: It's manifest the Apostle speaks of it as *reveal'd*, nay, as it is when acknowledg'd and embrac'd, and yet there is something *hidden* or *mysterious*. Thus we may conclude, against our Reasoner, that *Mystery* may be put for the *Gospel*, and yet call'd so, because it contains certain Truths, whose Nature cannot be fully comprehended, or certain Truths, that contain something in 'em that to us is incomprehensible. But yet, for all his magisterial decisive way of expounding Scripture, I think the words more naturally point at the *Mystery* of our Redemption, in the Incarnation of the Son of GOD, especially if we add hereto the ancient Reading used by these Fathers, St. *Austin*, and St. *Ambrose*, to the Acknowledgment of the *Mystery* [not Knowledge of *Mystery*, as this vain Disputer of this World would have it] of God in Christ, for, 1*st*, ἐν ᾧ, which immediately follows, must more naturally be apply'd to *Christ*, not to *Mystery*, agreeable to our Translation, *In whom all the*

the Treaſures, &c. This is agreeable to the Sentiments of *Origen*, ἐν ᾧ ἐστιν —ὅτι οἱ θησαυροὶ ἐν χειρῷ εἰσιν, In *Hierom. Hom.* 8. *pag.* 99. 2*dly*, If the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, and not *Chriſt* himſelf, was intended, it would be improper to ſay, that the Treaſures of Wiſdom are hid in it, being a reveal'd Inſtitution: Therefore we may juſtly conclude, purſuant to the Mind of St. *Clement*, That the Incarnation of our Redeemer (the Foundation of our *Redemption*, and Fountain whence all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge derive) is the *Myſtery* of God in *Chriſt*, which is to be acknowledg'd, not unravel'd or fully comprehended; for, ſince it is expreſly propos'd as a *Myſtery*, and remains one when embrac'd or acknowledg'd, it muſt be ſo, becauſe it carries in it ſomething that is hidden or incomprehenſible.

Indeed *Origen* manifeſtly joyns in this Notion; for, in his Comment on *Matt.* xiii. 44. he makes the *Field* to be the *Holy Scriptures*, that ſet forth all the Means of Salvation with the greateſt clearneſs; but the *Trea-*

sure to be CHRIST, because in Him all the Depths of Wisdom are hid, in *Him*, in a *Mystery*, citing this very Passage of St. *Paul*, by way of Proof, Τὰ ἀποκεκρυμμένα καὶ ἀνακείμενα τοῖς φανεροῖς [*dissertis verbis*] - νοήματα τῆς σοφίας ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένης καὶ τῷ Χριστῷ.

And now give me leave to make an Appeal, as he does, [to all Equitable Persons, *N.* 35.] Whether, by as good Reason and Authority, it does not appear, That not only the Sence of the Word, but the Things we contend for, are recorded in Scripture, as any he has produc'd to the contrary? So that, in truth, we are ready to [render up ourselves] to the Voice of Scripture, as well as submit the Merits of the Cause to it, without being influenc'd and carried away by such weak Practisings as he has set forth, in a Dialogue that would merit some Stripes, if perform'd by a School-boy, rather than Applause, as 'tis the Product of a pretending *Master of Reason.* See *Sect.* 36.

And now I have done with his Scripture-authorities, but cannot pass by one Remark of his, which I find to

to be the chief Improvement that graces his Second Edition: [*Nor is it undeſerving our particular Notice, that* Myſtery *is here made the diſtinguiſhing Mark of the Falſe and Antichriſtian Church*; (See *Rev.* xvii. 5.) *And no doubt but as far as any Church allows of* Myſteries, *ſo far it is Antichriſtian, and may, with a great deal of Juſtice, tho' little Honour, claim Kindred with the Scarlet Whore.*] Here is a very bold Stricture, and yet a Man with half an Eye may diſcern, that his Obſervation is as irrational and ridiculous as his Inference; for *Myſtery*, in this place, I ſuppoſe, would not have paſs'd for a diſtinguiſhing Mark, had not her Doctrines and Practices merited the other part of the Title, *viz. The Mother of Harlots, and Abomination of the Earth*; had ſhe not held *a golden Cup in her Hand, full of Abominations and Filthineſs of her Fornication*, Ver. 4. and been *drunken with the Blood of the Saints, and with the Blood of the Martyrs of Jeſus.* But as for his Inference, had he conſulted St. *Paul*'s Second Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians* a little

better, he might have learn'd, that there's a *Mystery of Iniquity* as well as *Godliness*; but perhaps he was unwilling to be disappointed of a malicious, tho' illogical, Suggestion; he might there have inform'd himself, That it was always the Devil's Business to imitate the *True Religion* by mighty Signs and lying Wonders, if it were possible, to deceive the very Elect; nay, that *Antichrist* sitteth in the Temple of GOD, shewing himself that he is GOD, and consequently he must pretend to *Mystery* with a witness: So that, upon the whole, this Gentleman may as well assign the Devil's Miracles for a distinguishing Mark of Antichrist, and prove the true Religion to be nearly related to Antichrist, the Scarlet Whore, and the Devil, because she proceeds upon the Authority of Miracles: Nay, rather we may upon his Argument affirm, That Miracles are a distinguishing Mark of the true Religion: And since *Antichrist* and the *Devil* pretend to *Miracles,* the Religion they pretend to must be true too. Whereas we know *these* to be Divine

and

and Authoritative, *thoſe* Diabolical and Uſurped, ſo we pronounce *this* the *Myſtery of Iniquity*, *that* the *Myſtery of Godlineſs*.

The next thing that offers itſelf, is, the Suffrage of the Primitive Church. It's true, there are a great many things intervene, wherein he labours more to give us a Specimen of his Wit, than Reaſon: But truly, I think, they are both of a piece, for I can diſcover nothing that deſerves a ſingle Reflection, much leſs a formal Reply. I proceed therefore to the Suffrage of the Fathers, to whom he makes an Appeal. He tells us indeed, [*It is not out of any deference to their Judgments*, N. 40.] and therefore we muſt conclude he ſubmits to it, becauſe he's perſwaded they peremptorily declare for his Opinion; but I hope to prove the contrary: For tho' he confeſſes he has beſtow'd a great deal of Pains upon 'em, yet this is ſo far from diſcouraging us from entering the Liſt, that I hope to make it appear, that his Pains are either an Effect of his Ignorance in theſe Authors, or of his Diſhoneſty

in suppressing their Opinions. And, first, all that he proves out of the Fathers is, That they have asserted other Notions of *Mystery* than what we contend for; whereas he himself assigns four or five different Notions; and if Classick Authors were consulted, we could produce some more: and therefore he might as well reject one of his own Notions, because the Fathers have not mention'd it. But I find this Author, upon every turn, shamefully betrays his Reason, for he knows not what is incumbent upon him to prove, and therefore we need not wonder if he proves not his main Design: I'm sure he's now to prove a Negative, (or that which amounts to it) if he proves any thing, *viz.* That the Fathers, he cites, no where apply the word MYSTERY to things beyond Humane Comprehension; or, that those Notions of the word *Mystery*, which he finds recorded, are deliver'd exclusively of all others; for, if he has neither cited all their Notions or Acceptations of the word, nor prov'd, that they are exclusive of all others, he proves nothing

thing againſt the acceptation of the word we now contend for; and if ſo, the moſt curſory Reader will preſently pronounce, That he muſt give up the Cauſe, in caſe he fixes it on this Iſſue, I mean the Authority of Fathers. But becauſe I will take no advantage of his weakneſs, I will go along with him in his own Inſtances. And,

1*ſt*, What he cites from *Clemens Alexand.* concludes nothing; for, I know no Chriſtian that denys the Chriſtian Religion to be [*an Illumination, becauſe it brought hidden things to light, and that with reſpect to the Moſaick Veil.*] But this only proves one of his own Notions, that is indeed allow'd by us. But to be ſhort with him; Whereas he has the Face to tell us, That *ſeveral of thoſe Texts of Scripture alledg'd by him, are by this Father expounded on his ſide, and conſequently againſt our Notion*: I ſhall appeal to what has been already cited from him, to prove the quite contrary *. Indeed I could add a great deal more to diſcover his Judgment of the Inconceivableneſs of certain

* See *p.* 46, 48.

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Objects of Faith, or Matters of Revelation; and, because I'm engag'd, I shall produce a few Instances: And, first, where he stiles Christianity an *Illumination*, he speaks of the *Fulness of Christ*, as a *Mystery* reveal'd indeed, but the Nature of it known to a very few; and he proves it from the Incomprehensible Nature of GOD, *Strom.* lib. 5. Ὁ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φονὴν, καὶ πᾶν νοῆμα, καὶ πᾶσαν ἔννοιαν, οὗ ἄν ποτε γραφῇ παραδοθείῃ, ἄῤῥητος ὢν δυνάμει αὐτοῦ, and yet more fully on *Moses*'s words, *Exod.* 33. *ver.* 18. *Shew me thy Glory*; Μὴ εἰς δίδακτον πρὸς ἀνθρώπων, μηδὲ ῥητὸν τὸ Θεὸν, ἀλλ' ἢ μόνῃ τῇ παρ' αὐτοῦ δυνάμει γνωστόν. 2. p. 365. *Strom. lib.* That is, by the *Effects of his Power*. Again, on St. *Paul*'s words, 1 *Cor.* 5. *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*; Strom. *lib.* 5. he observes, Ἄπορον ὡς Ἀσχηθῶς θύμα υἱὸς Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁγιαζόμενος. Here it's evident he argues from the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, and consequently must fix the *Mystery* on this Bottom, as well as the want of *Revelation*. Indeed, we may justly argue *à majori*, from the Sence of this Father, if the Nature

ture of the Godhead be, in the Opinion of this great Man, ſo highly incomprehenſible, how much more muſt the Fundamental Article of the Chriſtian Religion be ſo, that conſiſts of the Union of the Divine with Human Nature, and conſequently, in a proper ſence, *myſterious*. See *N.* 42.

Thus much for St. *Clement*; the next Authority is *Juſtin Martyr*, which concludes nothing to his purpoſe: For, Firſt, he only uſes the Word in a looſe Sence, and not excluſive of any other ſignification; and if this may be an Argument againſt that Sence which this Reaſoner declaims againſt, it will be ſo againſt others, which he has expreſly aſſigned. This may ſerve for a ſufficient Return to the next Paragraph, where *Tertullian* ſtiles all *Religious Rites*, or *Acts of Worſhip*, *Myſteries*; which among the Heathens were generally kept ſecret: yet, tho' this be an allowed Sence of the Word, it can be no Argument, but that *Myſtery*, even in *Tertullian*'s time, was apply'd to Things in 'emſelves abſtruce or incomprehenſible. Of the

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ſame ſtamp are his Arguments from *Origen*, which prove no more than what all ſides own, *viz.* that *Myſtery*, in a vulgar, or more looſe Sence, is put for *Symbols*, *Types*, or any *abſtruſe* or *ſacred Matter*. N. 44.

Certainly, had this *Gentleman* conſulted any other *Pieces* of this *Learned Father*, he might have inform'd himſelf, that he uſes *Myſtery* even in *Divine Matters*, for Things that are to us incomprehenſible. Thus, in the forecited Paſſage, ſpeaking of the Thing as it now is, he expreſſes himſelf, Ἀποκεκρυμμένα νοήματα τῆς σοφίας ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένης καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ. [*Ut Supra.* See *pag.* 56.]

Again, on the Words of our Saviour, *Mat.* xix. 24, 26. he obſerves, That GOD was able to make a *Camel* paſs thro' an *Eye of a Needle*; and yet no one but God or Chriſt, or he to whom he ſhall reveal it, is able to comprehend it, πῶς ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιῆσαι ὁ θεὸς δυνατὰ, ἀνθρώπου ἂν εἰδέναι, καὶ ὁ χριστὸς αὐτῷ, καὶ ᾧ μὲν ἀποκαλύψῃ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῷ. Afterwards he challenges any Man to Illuſtrate or Explain ſuch *Myſteries*; being Things only comprehended

hended, as well as performed, by GOD, Εἰ δὲ ἐμφαίνει ταῦτα καὶ παίζειν τελετὰς μυστήρια, καὶ ἐπὶ τέλει ἄγουσα διά πινων ὁδῶν τῷ μόνῳ δυνατῶν, ἢ μὴ, ὁ δυνάμενος ἐξετάζεσθω. *Pag.* 382. 1 Vol.

But now in the cloſe of this Paragraph, he thinks he ſufficiently explodes our Notion of *Myſtery*, when he tells us *Origen* [*was far from thinking any Doctrine of our Religion a* Myſtery, *in the preſent Sence of the Word, that he expreſly affirms them to agree all with common Notions, and to commend themſelves to the Aſſent of every well-diſpos'd Hearer.*] This truly looks very plauſible; but I'm perſwaded, *Origen*, in making good this Aſſertion, will run counter to the Notions of this *Indefatigable Reaſoner*: For Firſt, It's well known, who the Holy Father was engaged with, a Learned Heathen, who had formed an Objection, That the Chriſtians were to believe Things, tho' in themſelves never ſo abſurd or ridiculous; and therefore it was his buſineſs to take off the Objection, by ſhadowing forth the Reaſonableneſs of every Doctrine: He begins with

with the Doctrines of Natural Religion, the Being of a God, and our Love towards him; but when he comes to the *Mystery* of our *Saviour's Incarnation*, he makes a stand, and repeats *Celsus*'s Objection, *viz.* ὅτι ἐκ σηπτοῦ σώματος καὶ ὀστέα θεὸν νομίζομεν, καὶ ἐκ τετρωμένα θεᾶν δοκοῦμεν. The Answer is remarkable; for it evinces the Divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour, as a standing Doctrine of the Christian Church, to the Eternal Confusion of all *Socinian* Pretences to Antiquity. Let our *Accusers* know, that we (as it were speaking the Sence of the Christian Church) do not only think, but are fully perswaded, that he is Originally, or in the Beginning GOD, and the Son of GOD; nay, he is the Substantial Word, Wisdom, and Truth; and as for his Mortal Body, and Human Soul, we attribute the greatest Things to it; in as much as a most exact and compleat Union with his Divinity, it obtains a kind of Divinity; so that we may still treat our Blessed Saviour, GOD and Man, (as GOD) with the highest Acts of Divine Worship.

Worship. His words are these: Ἴσως οἱ ἐγκαλοῦντες ὅτι ὃν μὲν νομίζομεν καὶ πεπείσμεθα ἀρχῆθεν εἶναι Θεὸν, καὶ ὄντα Θεὸν, ἔστι δὲ ὁ αὐτόλογος καὶ ἡ αὐτοσοφία, καὶ ἡ αὐτοαλήθεια, τὸ δὲ ἴδιον αὐτοῦ σῶμα, καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχὴν τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο κοινωνίᾳ, καὶ ἑνώσει καὶ ἀναχράσει, τὰ μέγιστα φάμεν προσειληφέναι, καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου θειότητος κεκοινωνηκότα, εἰς Θεὸν μεταβεβηκέναι.

You see the great Design of the Apologist is to represent how such Honour and Dignity is derived upon the Humanity of our Saviour, and consequently the Reasonableness of paying Divine Worship to him even as God-Man, or God Incarnate; and pursuant to this, to justifie those Honours that accrew to the Body of our Saviour, he appeals to the Natural Transmutations of Matter, whereby Bodies are often highly refin'd and improv'd, and then ingeniously concludes, *Why should not the Infinite Power of GOD therefore be able to change the Mortal Body of Jesus?* εἰς αἰθέριον καὶ θείαν ποιότητα.

Thus we see how, out of Ignorance, or a worse Principle, the Disputer of this World (for the Title belongs to him, tho' not so deservedly

ly as those on whom St. *Paul* bestows it) has Misrepresented the Sence of this great Man, whose main Design was, to shew the Reasonableness of paying Divine Worship to the Blessed Jesus; and this he sufficiently perform'd, by asserting his Divinity, but he did not attempt to demonstrate the *Modus* of the Union of the two Natures by common Notions. He has indeed expressly asserted our Saviour's Divinity, as well as Humanity, in the highest Notion of it; and I defie this profound Reasoner to state the Union of both Natures by common Ideas or Notions, much less to give us as familiar an Idea of it as we have of Wood or Stone. Till he has done this, he trifles, and we shall still believe that our Saviour's Incarnation is thus far a *Mystery*. Thus we have turn'd those very Fathers he most relies on against him; and tho' he has the Confidence to fix a peremptory Challenge upon the Writings of the three first Centuries, I could produce as much more, had I not a regard to my own Time, and that of the Reader's, which ought

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to be a ſufficient Conſideration with every Man, to prevent him from engaging in Impertinences, or dwelling too long where Neceſſity does not require it: I ſhall therefore only beg Leave to add the Judgment of *Irenæus*, —— *Si autem omnium quæ in Scripturis requirantur abſolutiones non poſſumus invenire, — credere autem hæc talia debemus Deo, qui & nos fecit; rectiſſimè ſcientes, quia Scripturæ quidem perfectæ ſunt, quippe à verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus dictæ: Nos autem ſecundum quod minores ſumus & noviſſimi à verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus, ſcientiâ myſteriorum ejus indigemus; & non mirum eſt, ſi in ſpiritualibus cæleſtibus, & in his quæ habent Revelari hoc patimur nos, quandoquidem eorum quæ ante pedes ſunt — quæ & conteruntur à nobis, & videntur & ſunt nobiſcum, multa fugerunt noſtram ſcientiam, & Deo hæc ipſa committimus; — Si ergo & in rebus creaturæ, quædam quidem eorum adjacent Deo, quædam autem & in noſtram venerunt ſcientiam, quid mali eſt, ſi & eorum quæ in Scripturis requiruntur, univerſis Scripturis Spiritualibus exiſtentibus, quædam quidem*

absolvamus secundum gratiam Dei; quædam autem commendemus Deo, & non solum in hoc sæculo, sed in futuro, ut semper quidem Deus doceat, homo autem semper discat, quæ sunt a Deo? [Here, by way of Confirmation, he cites St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xiii. *v.* 13.] *Semper enim fides quæ est ad magistrum nostrum permanet firma, asseverans nobis, quoniam solus vere Deus,* [and afterwards concludes.] *si secundum hunc modum quem diximus, quædam quidem quæstionum Deo commiserimus, & fidem nostram servabimus, & omnis Scriptura ideo nobis data, consonans nobis invenietur.* Lib. 2. Adv. Hær. cap. 47. Ed. Eras. I have cited this at large, because I find every thing agreeable to the Hypothesis I have hitherto advanc'd. As,

1*st*, *Mystery* is indisputably apply'd to *reveal'd Truths*, beyond the reach of Humane Comprehension.

2*dly*, Such *reveal'd Truths* apparently deliver'd in Scripture, are not to be rejected; because we cannot resolve the Difficulties that seem to accompany the Belief of 'em, but to embrace 'em as the Word of GOD, and

and consequently as founded in infinite Wisdom and Veracity.

3*dly*, Our Unskilfulness, not to say Inabilities, in comprehending Objects of Sence, or Physical Matters, is made an Argument, that there are *Mysteries* in Matters of Revelation.

I have hitherto confin'd my self to his Rule, *i. e.* the Fathers of the Three First Centuries; but truly I can see no just reason why the Fathers of after-Ages may not be admitted into the present Controversie, at least as Witnesses, if not Judges. I'm sure there can nothing abstract, but his groundless Fiction of a general Combination, to resolve all *Religion* into *Mystery*: For, as for the received Use or Signification of the Word, certainly after-Ages may be as competent Judges as those of the First Century: And, as for the Controversie itself, Whether there's any Doctrine in Christianity *mysterious*, certainly that Age ought to be appeal'd to, that had a more special occasion to bring the Controversie upon the Stage, and this the *Arrian* Age, and those that follow'd it; for,

in this Age it's well known, those Doctrines we contend, are *mysterious*, were more nicely controverted. I shall therefore add to those Passages already cited, a few more, which prove the Use of the word to be apply'd to things incomprehensible; and that there are Doctrines in Christianity pronounc'd *Mysteries*, and that too for the Incomprehensibleness of 'em. The first I shall instance in is *Dionys. Areop.* where in one place he describes our Saviour's Incarnation, θεαρχικὴν τῆς ἀφθόγγου θεοπλασίας μυσίαν, Cap. 4. *de Cœlest. Hierarch.* In another place, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ πάσης θεολογίας ὑπερτέλεσον, ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἰησοῦ θεοπλασία, καὶ Ἄῤῥητος τότε λόγῳ παντὶ, καὶ ἄγνως & νῷ παντὶ, καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ περιστικῷ τῶν περισβυτέρων ἀγγέλων, καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀνδρικῶς ὑποφαίνει μυστικῶς παρειλήφαμεν, *Sect.* 9. *Cap.* 2. *de Divinis Nomin.* The second Instance is from a Tract entitl'd, *Expositio Fidei*, rejected indeed as a Piece of *Justin Martyr*; yet from *Leontin*'s, and other concluding Arguments, justly esteem'd to be the Product of the *Arrian* Age: He stiles the Unity and Trinity, Ἀπόῤῥητον, and confesses it cannot be un-

unfolded by Words, γλώσσῃ τὲ πηλίνῃ σαρκικῷ ῥυπῶντι, and upon the Incarnation of Chriſt, ὥταν ἐγὼ υτῶντι ἐπαπορήσω, τότε τοῦ μυστηρίου χριστιανῶν ἀνακράζω τὸ θαῦμα, ὅτι ὑπὲρ νοῦν, ὑπὲρ λόγον, ὑπὲρ κατάληψιν κτίστης φυσεως: And in ſuch deep Reſearch, at laſt, concludes with this Rule: προφερετοῖς ζητουμένοις ἑτοίμην λύσιν τὴν πίστιν.

And now we may conclude this Chapter much in the ſame ſtrain that he does *N.* 45. I do not find but [*the Fathers of the three firſt Centuries have exactly the ſame Notions of* Myſtery, *as well as thoſe that follow them,*] and for an Allay to his Jealouſies, I think they are pretty conſiſtent as well as unanimous; but then this Conſiſtency and Unanimity happens to be againſt a trifling Reaſoner, and therefore I muſt take the Reverſe to his concluding Period, [*and juſtly hope, by this time, the Cauſe of Incomprehenſible and Inconceivable, or* Myſteries *in Religion, will be more zealouſly maintain'd by all that ſincerely reſpect* Fathers, Scripture, *or* Reaſon.]

I come now to the Fourth Chapt. Sect. 3. which is an Anſwer to ſome Scripture-Objections, and particular-

ly from the Nature of Faith. I now find this Discourse swells upon me beyond Expectations; and therefore, as for the Scripture-passages cited by him, tho' there is more in 'em than he has suggested, yet I shall pass 'em, especially because I think the Merits of the Cause does by no means turn upon 'em: I shall therefore take up his Friend's Arguments concerning the Nature of Faith, and try if he may not be compel'd by dint of Argument, since he would not embrace the Advice of his Friend, *N.* 51.

And first, As for what he has delivered, *N.* 52, 53. I find nothing but what has already received an Answer, [*particularly what is cited*, Sect. 2. c. 2, & 7.] or at least, but what amounts to no more than will be concluded by what I'm going to offer; and therefore he may take it for a full, or competent Answer, *viz. Reason* is a necessary Handmaid, or Instrument of Faith; insomuch, that we must believe upon Rational Motives and Convictions: And thus far, I know no Son of the Church of *England*, that will dissent

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from him. As for what is delivered, *N.* 54. [*That Faith conſiſts of two parts, Knowledge and Aſſent.*] I think no one will be ſo abſurd to deny it; for I'm perſwaded there can be no Aſſent without Knowledge: Therefore, in a word, had I known his Deſign, I ſhould have excuſed the labour of citing ſo many Texts to prove it, and in a few words grant, *That in thoſe things we call the pure* Credenda *of Religion, we are at leaſt to know ſo much, as will enable us to form an Imperfect Idea of what it is God propoſes to our Belief; but it does not imply ſuch a Knowledge, as enables to unravel and comprehend the whole Nature of the Object, or the very Modes of its Exiſtence, or Properties; or much leſs, give a* Rationale *of every thing that belongs to it.* No, if we know as much as inſtructs us what it is God propoſes to our Belief, we ſubmit all the Difficulties that may ariſe from the Belief of it, to God's Power and Wiſdom, and yield an Aſſent (notwithſtanding ſome ſeeming Abſurdities) upon the Infinite Veracity of God. This diſtinguiſheth

Faith from a bare rational Assent in common Matters; and all this is consistent with what he has delivered, *N.* 55, 56. and therefore I shall not ingage in a particular Examination of what is there offered, To proceed then in order to a clear Demonstration of this Notion of Faith, I shall not consider the Case of *Abraham*'s Faith (being the next thing that offers it self) but shall instance in the Belief of the Creation; Thro' Faith we understand, that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God; so that Things which are seen, were made of Things which do not appear, *Heb.* xi. *v.* 3. Here I think is a vast difference between God's creative Power, in raising the World out of nothing, and restoring a dead Person to Life again, before the corruptible part was any wise dissolved. Indeed I cannot conceive how we can form an Idea of the possibility of such a Production; that God should raise so vast a stock of Matter, even all created Nature, and every thing that we can form any tolerable Ideas of, and yet without a-

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ny Materials to work upon, can never be comprehended. The *Platoniſt* ſuppoſed a Soul to the World, and the *Ariſtotelian* a firſt Mover, but could never give any tolerable account of the Riſe of Mundane Matter, without making it eternal. In ſhort, they always taught, That an Agent neceſſarily ſuppoſes a Patient really diſtinct from the Patient, eſpecially in external Actions; And we know in Numbers it's univerſally true, *Ex nihilo nihil eſt.* And we can conceive no otherwiſe in Nature, at leaſt the Reaſoner cannot on his Principles pretend to it; for he tells us, we can form no manner of Idea of nothing; and therefore how it is poſſible to form an Idea of the Creation by common Ideas, when all our Ideas take their riſe from Created Beings, even that of the Infinite and Eternal Being, are reſembled by Objects of his own production. It's true, we ſay this is an effect of Infinite Power, but we have no notion of the Thing, unleſs we apply Infinite Power to that which is the Subject of it, which is nothing into every

very thing; and when all is done, we form an Idea of this Infinite Power, purely by the Effects of it in Finite Beings: So that upon the whole, it's evident, the Belief of the Creation, (that implys a Production of all things out of nothing) is an Object that exceeds Humane Comprehension; and consequently we may conclude, that Faith (which yields an Assent to the Doctrine of the Creation) often implys an Assent to a Thing that contains something in it, that is Incomprehensible. And indeed, that Objects of Faith contain Things that exceed Humane Comprehension, is a Truth so indisputable, that Faith in the Judgment of the Primitive Church-Writers, was on this account distinguished from Knowledge or Science. 'It's true; 'In all Objects of Faith, we are to 'know so much of 'em, as to direct 'us what it is God proposes to our 'Belief. And Secondly, We are to 'believe, That it is God that propo-'ses 'em. Thirdly, In all Acts of 'Faith we are to yield an Assent to 'the Truth, or Being of Things; and

'this

'this ſuppoſes, that we have formed 'at leaſt an imperfect Idea of their 'Nature; but for the *Quomodo ſint*, 'that is, for the Manner of their Be-'ing, or Exiſtence, that may be an 'act of Knowledge, or Science, but 'not of Faith; ſo that if ſeeming 'Contradictions or Abſurdities ariſe 'on this account, and conſequently 'are thus far juſtly Incomprehenſi-'ble, Faith throws us upon the Infi-'nite Veracity of God. All this I ſhall endeavour to confirm by the Authorities of the Primitive Church. And,

Firſt, The Paſſage already cited from *Irenæus* manifeſtly inſtructs us, That there are Difficulties and Myſteries in *Revealed Truths*, which *Humane Reaſon* cannot comprehend, and obliges us to commit all ſuch Matters to GOD, becauſe they were delivered by his Word and Spirit; and what is this, but to embrace and believe upon his Infinite Veracity? And at laſt concludes, That if we obſerve the Method, *Fidem noſtram ſervabimus, & omnis Scriptura à Deo nobis data, conſonans nobis invenietur*: Does

Does not this imply, that there are things contained in Matters of Faith, that are Incomprehensible? Yea, rather that all seeming Difficulties, or Absurdities that arise from 'em, when scann'd by common Notions, or Ideas, are to be committed to God as the best Expedient to preserve a right *Faith*, see *Pag.* 64. But,

Secondly, *Clemens Alexand.* seems to state the Notion of *Faith* more clearly, in opposition to Science; And first he fixes the *Foundation of Faith* in the Word of GOD, or the *Holy Scriptures*, and represents it as an Irrefragible Foundation, that carries the highest Demonstration in it; and that we are to enquire no further than *Ipse dixit*, upon which he advances this Maxim, Ἀλήθεια γὰρ ὁ λόγος, ὁ δὲ ἀπιστῶν, τῷ λόγῳ, ἠπίστησε τῷ Θεῷ. And to let us see how far he extends it, he instances in the fore-cited Passage to the *Heb. Cap.* xii. *v.* 12. and thence proceeds to state the Difference between *Science* and *Faith*, thus, ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπιστήμη ἕξις ἀποδεικτική, ἡ πίστις δὲ χάρις ἐξ ἀναποδείκτων, *Vid. Stro. Lib.* 2. *P.* 362, 3, 4. and in his 5th Book he's more

more full, ὁ ἀπόστολος παρακαλεῖ ἵνα ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν μὴ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ τὴν μόνην, ἀντὶ τῆς ἀποδείξεων, διὰ μιᾶς τῆς πίστεως σώζειν δυναμένην. Here we ſee, *Faith* is reſolved into the Infinite Power and Veracity of GOD; inſomuch, that we are obliged to believe, as ſoon as we know it to be the Word of GOD, or as ſoon as we know GOD propoſes any thing to our Belief: Here we find Science and Faith oppoſed, the one requiring Demonſtration or Arguments, drawn from the Nature of the Thing; the other, not ſo: Therefore we muſt conclude, That if GOD propoſes any thing to our Belief, that contains Matters incomprehenſible, or not reconcileable with common Notions; *Faith*, in the *Opinion* of this Father, will command an *Aſſent*; inſomuch, that his Infinite Power and Veracity muſt over-ballance all ſeeming Abſurdities and Contradictions.

But to conclude this Argument, I ſhall produce the Judgment of St. *Chryſoſtom*: Thus he aſſigns the Reaſon, why the Natural Man cannot receive the Things that be of GOD, 1 *Cor.* ii. *v.* 14. *viz.* For the Im-

Immensity of the Things 'emselves, far exceeding the Comprehension of the most Improved Reason; and for the want of Faith, τούτεστι ὅτι πίστευς δεῖται τὰ λεγόμενα, καὶ λόγοις αὐτὰ καταλαβεῖν οὐκ ἔνι, ὑπερβαίνει γὰρ αὐτῶν τὸ μέγεθος ἐκ πολλοῦ τοῦ περιόντος τῆς ἡμετέρας διανοίας τὴν εὐτέλειαν, *Hom.* 7. And upon the Article of the Creation, *Heb.* xi. *v.* 3. he tells us, The Mind that is prepared for the Reception of Faith, must be παντὰ ὑπερβαινούσης ἰσθητὰ καὶ τὴν αἰσθένειαν τῶν λογισμῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων παρεργομένης; she must be elevated above Sence, and all sensible Objects; and pass over the Weakness of Humane Reasonings; and afterwards, Whereas, says he, Faith is vilified as a Thing that is void of Demonstration, ἀναπόδεικτον πρᾶγμα; or rather, a Thing full of Folly, καὶ ἀπάτης μᾶλλον ὄν, the *Apostle* shews us in *this one Instance*, ὅτι τὰ μέγιστα διὰ πίστεως καὶ οὐ διὰ λογισμῶν κατορθοῦνται; for the very Article, says he, is not established by Reason, but rather the contrary, ὁ μὲν γὰρ λογισμὸς οὐδὲν ὑπεβάλλει τοιοῦτον, ἀλλὰ τοὐνάντιον. *Hom.* 22. In *Epist. Heb.*

Again we find him describing Faith under the very same Notion, *Hom.*

Hom. 23. in *Ter. Johan.* where, upon *Nichodemus*'s Words, *How can a Man be born when he is old?* v. 4. he obſerves, τὸ γὰρ [πῶς τοῦτο] τῶν οὐ σφόδρα πιστευόντων ἐστὶν ἐπαπόρρησις τῶν δὲ ἀπὸ γῆς ἔτι. Upon which he enlarges, and tells us, It is the Queſtion of Hereticks upon the Incarnation of our Bleſſed Saviour, (demanding, πῶς ἐσαρκώθη πῶς ἐγενήθη) that by the weakneſs of common Notions, or Reaſonings, deſtroy his Immenſe Nature, καὶ τῇ τῶν οἰκείων λογισμῶν ἀσθένειᾳ, τὴν ἄπειρον ἐκείνην ἀποβάλλοντες οὐσίαν; and at laſt concludes, That ſuch Practices, or Queſtions, τῆς πίστεως ἐκπεσοῦνται τῆς ὀρθῆς. And on the Second Part of the Queſtion, about entring the Womb a Second time, he obſerves, When a Man proceeds upon common Notions, or Reaſonings in Spiritual Matters, and does not receive the Dictates of Faith, καὶ μὴ δέχεται τὴν τῆς πίστεως συνκατάθεσιν. He talks like a Drunken or Madman, uttering the moſt abſurd and ridiculous things.

And now, certainly, we may conclude, what St. *Chryſoſtom*'s Notion of Faith was, without drawing Inferences

ferences; and that it every way agrees with that of *Clemens Alexandrinus*: It's therefore manifeſt, Faith is diſtinguiſhed from Knowledge, or Science, not only as the Objects of it are Matters of Revelation, but as they contain Things that are incomprehenſible; and yet it yields an Aſſent upon the Infinite Veracity of the Word of GOD: I'm ſure this Great Man has dropt ſuch unlucky Words againſt our *Adverſary*'s Principles, or his Methods of Examining Divine Truths, as if he were riſen from the Dead, and were preparing to accuſe him of Hereſie, or ſome ſly Maxims that look that way. I ſhould therefore adviſe him to weigh the Opinion of ſo Great a Perſon, before he advances too far: and yet, when I conſider what ſevere Cenſures he has paſt upon the Writers of this Age, I deſpair of Succeſs in giving Advice in this kind; for I cannot think he'll ever be perſwaded to take his Meaſures of Faith, from an Age, or any Writer in it, when he makes 'em, as it were, to have entred into a League to turn all Religion into *Myſtery*, and

and this another to be Name for *Impoſture*, or *Prieſtcraft*: If this be true, to be inſtructed by ſuch a Race of Men, is, in plain *Engliſh*, to take up one's Faith from thoſe that have fallen away from the Faith; but of this I ſhall ſay more in the laſt Chapter.

To return then: It's now abundantly evident, that the Notion of Faith which we now contend for, is not a Thing contrived to advance a particular Hypotheſis, or ſerve a particular Deſign, but by no means ſuch a one as he ſuggeſts, *viz.* [*To ſtop the Mouths of ſuch as demand a Reaſon where none can be given, and to keep as many in Ignorance, as Intereſt ſhall think convenient.* See N. 48.] But I hope an Impartial Reader will find it eſtabliſh'd upon a good Foundation, or in a word, upon ſuch Reaſons as he is not able to ſubvert or remove; beſide, if it be a Contrivance, we have this Apology, that it is not a late Forgery, ſince we have traced it almoſt as far as any Eccleſiaſtical Records, (beſides thoſe of Scripture) admit of; and this is a conſiderable

Presumption of the Injustice of such foul-mouthed Aspersions, till he gives us a better Set of Arguments to remove it; which is the next Thing that should be examined: but truly there appears so little in 'em, that I think they scarce deserve a distinct Examination:

The First is, [*If Faith were not a Perswasion resulting from the previous Knowledge and Comprehension of the Thing believed, there could be no Degrees nor Differences of it.*] Now First, It's manifest, the Argument is advanced on a false Supposition, (and that which runs thro' all his Observations) *viz.* That we deny all Degrees of a previous Knowledge of the Object; whereas we say, there must be at least such a previous knowledge of the Object, as instructs us what it is GOD proposes to our Belief; but there's no necessity of Comprehending the Absolute Nature of the Thing, so as to be able to give a *Rationale* of every Thing that really belongs to it; and that too, by trying it by common Notions. And moreover, we say, the different Degrees

of

of Faith, do by no means riſe from ſuch a Comprehenſive Knowledge: No, when once we know what GOD propoſes to our Belief, the Degrees of Faith ariſe from the Application of GOD's Veracity to our Minds and Conſciences; if the Mind is poſſeſſed with a deep Sence of it, as to engage us to place an abſolute Confidence in it, tho' we cannot form a *Rationale* of the Thing, yet we may embrace it with the higheſt Degrees of Faith: I'm ſure, this is the Doctrine which [*this Man of Reaſon*] might have learn'd from S. *Paul*, in the Caſe of *Abraham*, *Who againſt Hope, believed in Hope,---and being not weak in Faith, he conſidered not his own Body now dead, nor yet the Deadneſs of Sarah's Womb: he ſtaggered not at the Promiſe thro' Unbelief, but was ſtrong in Faith, giving Glory to GOD, and being fully perſwaded, that what he had promiſed he was alſo able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs*, Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20, 21.

2d Arg. [*The Subject of Faith muſt be intelligible to all, ſince the Be-*

lief thereof is commanded under no less a Penalty than Damnation.] As for the Intelligibleness of Objects of Faith, I have already stated how far that is necessary; but, with Submission, I think the Sin and Damnation of Unbelief, arises, not because GOD has furnish'd us with a perfect *Rationale* of the Nature of every Object of Faith, and we reject it; but because he hath furnish'd us with Means sufficient to know what he hath proposed to our Belief, and to know that he hath proposed them, and we will fully reject 'em; and consequently what he proposes: but more especially, because he hath asserted the Truth of 'em, by the highest Demonstrations of the Spirit, in mighty Signs and Wonders: This was the Case of the *Jews*; but now ye say, Ye see, therefore your Sin remaineth.

4th Arg. [*Except Faith signifies an Intelligible Perswasion, we cannot give others a Reason of the Hope that is in us.*] The Inference is apparently false; for we certainly give a Reason (and that too, according to the Mind

Mind of St. *Peter*) of any Article of Faith, when we prove that it is Revealed by GOD, and that we yield an Aſſent to the Truth of it (tho' we cannot remove every Difficulty that may ariſe from it) upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity.

As for his *Third*, and *Fifth Obſervations*, I ſhall Appeal to any unprejudiced Reader, whether there's any thing in 'em, that deſerves a particular Reply, more than in thoſe Objections he firſt framed, and then anſwered: For as the former prove nothing againſt the Incomprehenſibleneſs of Matters of Faith, ſo the latter were never advanced, to prove the Neceſſity of admitting ſuch Objects of Faith. Upon the whole then, I think it appears, there are Matters of Faith that contain Things in 'em, which are Incomprehenſible, and yet Faith yields an Aſſent upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity, and conſequently it's an uncontroulable Argument, there are *Myſteries* in the *Chriſtian Religion*.

The next thing to be conſidered, is, his Reply to the Argument of Mi-

racles, *Cap.* 5. *Sect.* 3. And, First, he entertains you with the Nature of a Miracle. And as for the Description he gives us, I find, in the Main, no Reason to except against it; after this, he guards it with some Limitations: The First of which is, That a Miracle is not to be admitted contrary to Reason; I suppose, he means contrary to common Notions, or those Idea's which Reason has formed from Sence, Experience, or Instruction. And, no doubt, this is a very just Limitation: 'For a Mira-'cle is performed upon Objects of 'Sense; and 'tis an Address to our 'Senses, or a Demonstration accom-'modated to the outward Senses, 'by some sensible Effects, or Opera-'tions; and consequently, nothing 'is to be admitted as a Miracle, that 'contradicts the Testimony of the 'Senses; and we are, at least, so far Judges of its possibility, that in Case it manifestly contradicts the Testimony of our Sence, we may justly rank it among Impossibilities, and reject it as such. But further than this, I cannot discern, that we are com-

competent Judges of the Poſſibility of any Miracle; for to judge of its Poſſibility, ſuppoſes a knowledge of its *Modus*: But this our *Adverſary* will not allow; [*For the manner of Miracles*, (ſays he) *is not explicable*. N. 77.

Thus far we are agreed; but I know not how this Limitation, much leſs thoſe that follow, affect the preſent Controverſie. Indeed, he at laſt comes to the Point, and tells us, [*Miracles are not above Reaſon, tho' we know nothing of the* Modus.] But I would fain know, why a Thing that contains ſomewhat in the Nature of it, which exceeds Human Comprehenſion, is not as properly *above Reaſon*, or *Myſterious*, as a Thing (in itſelf intelligible) only it lies dormant, becauſe ſhadowed thro' a Veil. I'm ſure, *Origen* tells the contrary, *Comment. in Mat.* 19. 24, 26. *ut ſupra*. See *pag.* 61.

But I have expoſed the Folly of this Aſſertion in another place. Indeed, I ſhould have turned his own Arguments upon him, had he not prevented me, by reviving 'em in ſuch a manner, as gives me a better

advantage over him. We have it thus, [*At the beginning of my Book, I maintained, the Manner, as well as the Thing was explicable. But of what? Of Miracles. No, surely; but of those Doctrines, in Confirmation of which the Miracles are wrought.* See *N.* 77.] This is truly an unaccountable Paradox. Miracles are certainly the Demonstrations of Sence, and consequently are to be scann'd and judg'd of by common Ideas, even the most clear and indisputable, such as result from *Objects of Sence*; but it's concluded, that Matters of *Revelation* are founded on Objects that are Spiritual and Infinite, and consequently are to us more abstruse and incomprehensible.

Again, Miracles are a direct and immediate Address to the Sence and Reason of Mankind, and are design'd to give an unquestionable Credit to every *reveal'd Truth*, since they procure the Testimony of Infinite Veracity in the behalf of it; and therefore, all the *Reason* and *Arguments* in Nature will direct, that they should pass the severest Scrutiny. But in Mat-

Matters of Revelation it's concluded, that a great deal reſts upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity, and this depends upon the Evidence of Miracles; and therefore it's abſurd to demand a clearer and more preciſe Comprehenſion of the Nature of *reveal'd Truths* than of *Miracles*.

This Gentleman owns, that *Miracles* are a Confirmation of *reveal'd Truths*; that is, at leaſt, as they are an abſolute Atteſtation of their Divine Original: And this is an uncontroulable Demonſtration of the Truth of them. Indeed I'm perſwaded the meereſt Novice in Logick will tell him, That we are to have, at leaſt, as adequate a Knowledge of that which is to confirm, as that which is confirmed by it; or that the Premiſes are to carry as great Evidence in 'em as we expect in the Concluſion: Therefore it's abſurd to ſay, that the *Modus* of *Miracles* is inexplicable, and the *Modus* of all *reveal'd Truths* not ſo. Indeed this Gentleman ſeems to have furniſh'd us with Weapons to fence againſt him with the greateſt Advantage; for if ſuch Poſitions as theſe

muſt

must pass for Truth, it must be Truth in a *Mystery*. And truly, we could not have desir'd a better Argument against him; for, if the *Modus* of *Objects of Sence* be inexplicable, certainly the *Modus* of *reveal'd Truths* are much more inexplicable; the Immenseness of whose Nature to a Finite Mind, renders them incomprehensible.

Again, the *Modus* of *Objects of Sence* is not to be explain'd by Ideas of the same kind; much less, is the *Modus* of Infinite and Spiritual Objects to be explain'd by the Ideas of *Objects of Sence*: 'So that, in a word, 'since *Miracles* (as *Objects of Sence*, 'with respect to the *Modus* of 'em) 'are inexplicable, and by conse-'quence justly to be esteem'd *above* '*Reason*, much more are Matters of 'Revelation, with respect to their '*Modus*, to be esteem'd inexplicable, '*above Reason*, and consequently *my-'sterious*.

I come now to examine, in the last place, his pretended Historical Account of the Rise of *Mystery*, and the Causes of it, under this Title, [*When, why,*

why, and by whom were Myſteries *brought into Chriſtianity*, Cap. 6. Sect. 3.] And truly I am perſwaded what has already been deliver'd will be eſteem'd (by an impartial Reader) a ſufficient Confutation to this whole Chapter, (at leaſt if it anſwers the Title) without examining any Paragraph: However, I think it deſerves no Anſwer, but a ſhort Reply to the Title, and that is capable of no other, but ſuch as we give to an impertinent Queſtion of the *Romaniſts*, *Where was your Religion before* Luther? 'As to the time when *Myſtery* 'was introduc'd, I hope it's ſuffici-'ently prov'd to be of the ſame Date 'with Chriſtianity itſelf, being foun-'ded not in *Names* or *Words* only, 'but in *Certain Truths*, that are pro-'pos'd as *Objects of Faith*. But, 2dly, 'for the Perſon by whom, or that 'introduc'd it, I'm perſwaded there's 'enough offer'd to charge it upon the 'Bleſſed Author of the Inſtitution. 'Laſtly, For the Reaſon why *Myſte-'ries* were introduc'd, I ſhall leave 'em to this notable Reaſoner to di-'ſpute it out with the Infinite Wiſ-

'dom

'dom of GOD, in not creating Man 'with larger and more comprehen- 'sible Faculties, or not contriving 'some more familiar Method of Re- 'demption. And now, if what has already been deliver'd stands good against this Author, (there being as yet no reason to suspect it) I'll appeal to all the World, whether it does not destroy the malicious Suggestions of this Chapter, which make *Mystery* to be a Trick of *Priestcraft*, contriv'd for the support of Secular Grandeur and Dominion.

But, to descend to a few Particulars; He observes, (and that too with a great deal of Contempt and Scorn) That the Christian Church initiated their Converts in a Way and Method not much unlike that of the Heathen World; which is the most he can make of all his *Allegations*. Now we own, the Christian Converts were gradually initiated, that they were rank'd in several Classes, and had a Discipline, and Instructions, peculiar to each Class, and thereupon prohibited the publication of the sublimest Parts of Religion, to any but those that

that had gone through the inferiour Classes; and truly, such Injunctions have not only the unquestionable Dictates of Prudence for their Vindication, but Apostolick Practice and Approbation; for 'tis the establish'd Method with the *Hebrew* Converts, as well as those at *Corinth*; they were brought on gradually to Perfection, first by Milk, then by strong Meats, the one accommodated to Babes in Christ, the other to those of full age; see *Heb.* v. *ver.* 12, 13, 14. and 1 *Cor.* iii. 2. where it's probable the *Jewish* Converts were first instructed in those Scriptures that set forth the easiest parts of our Saviour's Offices, as *Prophet*, *Priest*, and *King*; but afterwards, those that asserted his Divinity. I'm sure St. *Clement* makes these Babes to be the *Catechumens*, or those that were instructed in the Catechistick Parts of Christianity; but the Perfect, those that were instructed in the sublimest parts of *Religion*; to wit, the *Essence* of the *Divine Nature*. But now the great Crime is, that all these Measures of Initiation were taken from the Heathens:

thens: And this is prov'd, because they are much the same.

It is not now my business to examine the Parallel; tho' I must confess there are, in a great many things, very lively Resemblances: But as for the Crime, I cannot discern where that lies, since the Christians did not symbolize with any Design to form a Comprehension between *Heathenism* and *Christianity*; nor (as this Author suggests) out of an Opinion of any Religion contain'd in such Rites, see *N.* 97. but out of a Zeal for GOD, and the Souls of Men, they, in St. *Paul*'s Language, *became all things unto them, that if possible they might enlarge the Territories of Christ's Kingdom, and save some*; for, as long as they acted on these Principles, I think there was no more Guilt in 'em, than in St. *Paul*'s occasional Compliances with *Jewish* Rites. Indeed our Adversary elsewhere [*Num.* 78, 79.] gives this very account of these Initiations or Compliances; and therefore, I cannot conceive how he can justifie so base an Aspersion, *viz.* *N.* 90. [*Here is enough to shew how Chri-*

Chriſtianity became myſterious, and how ſo Divine an Inſtitution did, thro' the Craft and Ambition of Prieſts and Philoſophers, degenerate into meer Paganiſm.] It's well known there are other Accounts given of thoſe Religious Rites that were introduc'd in the Primitive Church, than thoſe already aſſign'd; and thoſe too, that are abundantly ſufficient to vindicate the Lawfulneſs of 'em: I ſhall refer him to St. *Cyril*, the Author he has cited, who is very particular on this Subject.

But, in a word, it's manifeſt they were in 'emſelves the beſt Expedients to maintain the Diſcipline of the Church, and eſtabliſh a regular and uniform Piety, as well as orthodox, clear, and well-digeſted Faith; ſo unjuſt is the Charge, that makes 'em Artifices to introduce *Myſtery*, *Ignorance*, and *Blind Obedience*.

2*dly*, As for thoſe Emblematical Rites introduc'd in the Adminiſtrations of the Chriſtian Sacraments, they might poſſibly contribute to the eſtabliſhing *Myſteries* in a *Jewiſh* Sence, as it is uſed for Typical Repreſentations,

tions: but they seem to have no tendency to establish Mystery in the sence we contend for; I mean, as it is put for Incomprehensible Truths.

But let us *reflect* a little on the *Baseness* of this *Accusation:* Here's a general Combination in the Pastors of the Catholick Church, and a great many Hellish Designs form'd in the Womb of it; *Ambition* and *Covetousness* is the original Spring, *Ceremony* and a great many *superfluous Rites* the Instrument, and the grand Designs were to turn *Religion* into *Mystery*, even to that degree, that in the Opinion of this Author, it has made a Divine Institution degenerate into Paganism; *N.* 90. But, for what Reason? Purely because some Christian Rules of Discipline resemble the Religious Rites of Heathens; for, there can no other be fix'd on those that are truly Primitive. If this be so, I'm sure the Censure is extravagantly absurd. What if a sober Heathen acts upon the strict Rules of Justice, and abhors Slander and Detraction, more than this Calumniator; must not a good Christian practice the

the ſame Virtue, for fear of being charg'd with Paganiſm? I'm ſure the Caſe is the ſame where the Thing is innocent or lawful.

Indeed, this Gentleman declaims againſt *Myſtery* very heartily, but I am afraid he has too much dealing with one ſort of it; for, ſuch *Illogical*, ſuch *Groundleſs*, ſuch *Vile Aſperſions*, muſt take their Riſe from the *Myſtery of Iniquity*, that reigns in the high places; for 'tis nothing elſe but the Language of him that is juſtly ſtiled, *the Accuſer of his Brethren.*

But, to proceed a little further, I find he has an immortal Abhorrence of the *Croſs in Baptiſm*, of *Altars*, of the *Dedication* or *Conſecration of Churches*, *Muſick*, the *Rites of Burial*; and, in a word, of the *Inſtitution of National Churches*, which he ſeems to call *Human Faction*, or *Policy*, in one place; [See *pag.* 172. *Ed.* 2. and *Uſurpations upon Mankind* in another, *N.* 93.] Now theſe are Rites and Sanctions enjoyn'd and practis'd in the Eſtabliſh'd Church of *England*; and when he thinks fit to diſcover wherein the Evil of them conſiſts, or that the People of this National

Church are not obliged to yield an Obedience to 'em, I promise an *Answer*, and such as will set him off in his own Colours and Language too; that is, prove him an impertinent Trifler. It's true, he seems to explode 'em, because [*nothing like these are in the Writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contain'd in the Books of the* Gentiles, *and was the Substance of their Worship*:] when we make such things the Substance of our Worship, then let him accuse us: "But as for the Necessity of finding "the particular Ceremonies in the "Writings of the Apostles, we say "there's none; it's sufficient we find "'em by a fair Consequence, inas-"much as we find an Ecclesiastical "Power commissioned to enact pru-"dent Laws for the Peace and Unity "of the Church, for the maintenance "of Decency, Order, and Uniformi-"ty in the Publick Worship of God; "and as long as Ceremonies are cho-"sen, with respect to the Number, "so as not to bring a Burden, and "create Distraction in the Publick "Worship of God, and with respect "to the Nature of 'em, inasmuch as "they

"they carry a manifeſt Tendency to-
"wards the Advancement of the
"Ends of Religion.

Again, we ſay Apoſtolick Practice or Tradition, and an uninterrupted Cuſtom of the Primitive Church, is certainly a conſiderable Argument not only of the Lawfulneſs, but Authority of 'em, eſpecially ſo as that *none ſhall diſpute an Obedience, when once they are enjoyn'd by our proper Eccleſiaſtical Superiours.* I'm ſure *Tertullian* makes this an expreſs Rule of Obedience in theſe matters, tho' this Author, by the help of a falſe Citation, ſeems to inſinuate the contrary: *Harum & aliarum ejuſmodi diſciplinarum ſi legem expoſtules Scripturarum nullam invenies: Traditio tibi prætendetur* [*by way of Rule*, whereas he reads it, *prætenditur*] *Auctrix, conſuetudo confirmatrix, & fides obſervatrix*, Lib. de Coron. c. 4.

But to draw towards a Concluſion, I do not now intend a formal Vindication of Ceremonies; however, I think I have offered enough to publiſh the Ignorance or Impudence of the Man; when he aſſerts, That [*nothing is ſo naturally oppoſite as Ce-*

remony and Christianity, N. 95.] What, even those that are appointed to determine (for Decency, and Uniformity's sake) the Natural Circumstances of Publick Worship, such as Time, Place, and Manner? 'Let him make this out by dint of 'Argument, and I'll engage (as was 'offered before) he shall have a fair 'Answer. And now I have gone thro' a tedious Harrangue, which whether it be more made up of Impotent Malice, or Illogical Conclusions, is disputable; and therefore, I think myself happy to arrive at his Conclusion, and more happy that I find little in it, that either deserves, or can justly provoke a Reply: for I find him either bantering the World with his own Objections, and Answers, which if placed in the Ballance, will not weigh a Grain to effect the Merits of the Cause either way, or giving 'em an account of his next Undertakings, tho' in his last Edition, he's so prudent to add a *Reserve*, that I'm much afraid will baulk the Expectation of the Thing; for he let's us know, he'll take his own time for it, as a thing not in the Command of

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any Mortal; and I'm perſwaded he'll prove the Maxim by experimental Demonſtration; for, I believe, want of Health, or Buſineſs, or ſomething elſe, will make it a good while before he puts his finiſhing hand to his new intended Syſtem of Divinity. One or two things, however, I cannot but remark, before I take a final leave. And,

Firſt; After all this Argument, the Reader may imagine that the Difference between us is not conſiderable; for he allows, That we cannot pretend to an Adequate Knowledge of Things; and we ſay, That *Divine Truths* are chiefly *Myſterious*, in reſpect of the *Modus* of 'em; and as it's impoſſible to comprehend the *Myſterious* part of 'em, ſo we grant it's not neceſſary to be known, or comprehended: But yet for all this, the *Difference* is very conſiderable; for this Gentleman peremptorily affirms, That the *Modus* of all *Revealed Truths*, is explicable; ſee *Num.* 77. *Sect.* 3. And in the Concluſion he tells us, If his Hypotheſis ſtands good, [*Whatever Inſtance can be alledged* (he means in contradiction to

to it) *must either be found not* Mysterious, *or if it prove a* Mystery, *not Divinely revealed*;] so that he has formed a most Compendious Rule for discarding the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, if any be proposed, whose *Modus* he cannot comprehend, and that too by common Ideas, or Notions, his Hypothesis directs, That they are to be rejected as not Divinely revealed: Indeed, whosoever surveys his Hypothesis, may at the first glance discern this to be the Design, though he had not blabed out the Secret in the close of it; and certainly the Design is so pernicious, and (tho' formed on a weak Hypothesis) liable to influence an unwary Reader, and cheat him out of the main of his Creed, that I wonder this Gentleman has escaped so long without being chastised by some Pen more accurate than I can pretend to.

The Second thing I shall take notice of is, The Provisions he has made against an Answer; for he tells us, That [*no particular Instances, or Doctrines of any sort, can serve for a proper Answer to this Discourse.*] This

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is pretty well truly! He has been very Majeſterial in advancing his own Poſitions, and will he be as abſolute in preſcribing to his Anſwerers? As if nothing muſt paſs for an Anſwer, that is not formed by his Model, or has not received his *Imprimatur*. As for the force of Inſtances, it's very well known, that an oppoſite Inſtance is perfect Demonſtration againſt a peremptory, and univerſal Poſition in an Adverſary; and the force of Poſitions, Arguments, or Notions that exiſt in Theory, or Univerſals, are beſt illuſtrated and imprinted by Inſtances. I'm ſure he proceeds by theſe Meaſures in all his Reaſonings, and will he debar others of thoſe Priviledges he allows himſelf? This is to make himſelf the abſolute Sovereign of Reaſon and Argument; as if the reſt of Mankind had no Right to uſe any more of either, but what he cantons out by his own Weights, and Meaſures. But he tells us, Inſtances can be no Anſwer to his Diſcourſe, [*As long as the Reaſons of it hold good:*] Very true, for if the Reaſons hold good, the Inſtances

ſtances alledg'd againſt 'em muſt be impertinent, or incompetent: But the Inſtances I have produced are levell'd againſt his *Reaſons* and *Poſitions* too, and, I hope, they ſufficiently deſtroy both, and then the Method of Anſwering will juſtifie itſelf without his Licenſe or Approbation.

In a word, as for this Anſwer, I offer it to every candid impartial Reader with Deference and Submiſſion, who, I queſtion not, will paſs over ſome little Slips or Blots that may ariſe thro' heat of Argument, if the main Lines are correct and clear. And as for this Gentleman, or his Zealous Admirers, I tender the Subſtance, or principal Parts of it, to be treated as he has peremptorily reſolved at the foot of his Diſcourſe; I mean, *give it no more Quarter than he will to Error*; but, according to his utmoſt Abilities and Opportunities, expoſe it in its true Colours, that he may not be charg'd as an Acceſſary againſt himſelf, in rendring his own Labours ineffectual, by weakly mincing or ſoftening of any thing.

FINIS.

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